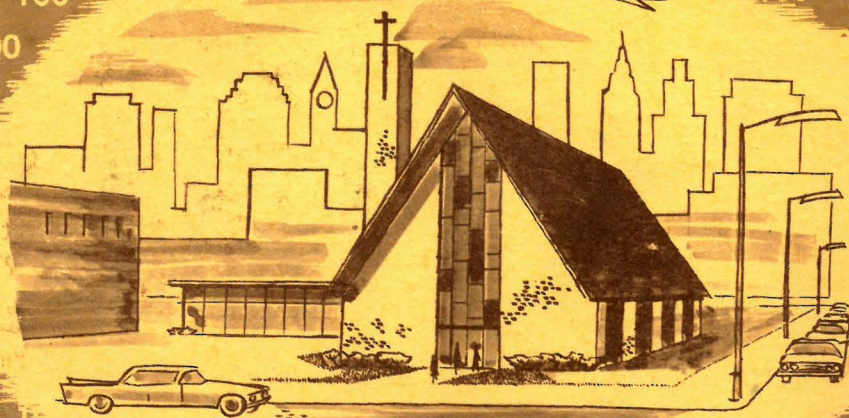


# **A Century of Grace and Witness**

**1860 - 1960**



**The Mennonite Brethren Church**







# A Century of Grace and Witness

## 1860 - 1960

### Contents

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Preface                              | 2  |
| Our History                          | 3  |
| The Board of Reference and Counsel   | 11 |
| Foreign Missions                     | 13 |
| General Welfare (Relief and Service) | 23 |
| The Conference Endowment Fund        | 29 |
| Education                            | 31 |
| Publication                          | 45 |
| Sunday School                        | 50 |
| City Missions                        | 54 |
| Home Missions                        | 55 |
| Evangelism                           | 60 |
| Our Youth                            | 63 |
| Music                                | 68 |
| Women and the Church                 | 71 |
| The Mennonite Brethren Church        | 75 |
| Acknowledgements                     | 80 |



## Preface

The Mennonite Brethren Church had its beginning on January 6, 1860. By the grace of God this brotherhood has been permitted to witness for one century.

In order to review the history of the brotherhood and show its present organization and work so that we might praise our God more effectively and orientate ourselves more intelligently for the future, the Board of Reference and Counsel charged a committee of three brethren with the production of this centennial book, *A Century of Grace and Witness*. They are Orlando Harms, chairman; Walter Wiebe and Leonard J. Franz. In the publishing of this book Brother Wiebe served as editor and Brother Harms as assistant. Brother Marvin Groening of our Mennonite Brethren Publishing House in Hillsboro was responsible for production.

It is our prayer that this book may help us to see the history and present workings of our brotherhood, so that we may realize more fully the grace of God that has operated in our midst and that as a result of this renewed vision we may be better witnesses in the century ahead.

Dan Friesen, Chairman  
Conference of the Mennonite Brethren  
Church of North America



# Our History

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee . . ." (Deuteronomy 8:2).

If we want our centennial to be meaningful we must bring to it an understanding of our history. Our centennial observance is inadequate unless we bring to it a consciousness that God has led us, and a clear knowledge of the way in which He led us. As a brotherhood we need to maintain such a sense of history. God gave the charge to His people to do this by remembering all the way which the Lord God had led them.

To gain an understanding of our history we have the advantage of time. The perspective of time is an aid to a fuller understanding. We have exactly one century through which we may look back at the decisions made and the actions taken in 1860. We know that in God's disposition of history He doesn't deal with such neat packages of time, but in His mercy He allows us to mark it off in this way. We do so in this centennial observance for a distinct purpose—to ponder and reflect in order that we might understand more fully God's purpose with us. Only as we understand our history in this way are we really prepared to move forward purposefully.

In order to understand our history we need more enlightenment than time and circumstances can give us. We need the light from above. Only as we see our history in the light of God's Word do we attain unto a right understanding of it. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

## *The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia*

The story of the origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia one hundred years ago may be read with interest; but it should also humble us, and it must challenge us who profess to follow the brethren who began so nobly. There are points of inspiration in that story, and much that should lead us to humble thankfulness to God for the things which He wrought through human vessels.

The Mennonite Brethren Church was born in a period of spiritual decline. Symptoms of spiritual deadness abounded in the Mennonite life of mid-

nineteenth century South Russia—the card-playing, dancing, drinking, loose living on market days in larger centers were freely participated in by Mennonites; the life in the homes, the social life, was characterized by excesses; hog-butcherings, days, weddings or other social occasions were taken as an excuse for indulging in intoxicating liquors. Church life was spiritually inert; cold, formal services with a lifeless reading of sermons drew a weak attendance to church. Most tragic of all, the leadership was in too many cases apathetic towards these conditions, and in some recorded instances satisfied to find personal gratification in them.

The mid-nineteenth century saw a spiritual awakening in many areas of Western Europe, in England and North America. This also spread into Russia. A Mennonite congregation in Prussia came into very close contact with Moravian Brethren and benefited spiritually from this contact, receiving a heritage of vital Christianity, a knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, sympathy, interest and love for missions and schools. This Mennonite church transplanted itself by emigration into South Russia in 1835, and as the village Gnadenfeld became a part of the Molotschna colony.

As possessor and promulgator of such vital Christian living this village and its church became a strong spiritual center of the colony. From this center there arose what came to be known as the brethren movement (*das Brudertum*). In essence this was an expression of basic Christian fellowship. Once a month, on Saturday afternoons, small groups of believers gathered in homes in various villages to conduct a fellowship meeting, the main elements of which were Bible study and prayer. Those who attended were active participants. Their participation had been preceded by personal preparation at home in assiduous study of their own Bibles and cultivation of a personal prayer life. This spirit and idea of brotherly fellowship with its roots in a personal devotional life was an initiating factor leading to the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

In 1845 Pastor Eduard Wuest came from Germany to serve Lutheran-Pietist congregations in close proximity to the Molotschna colony. His





Abraham Cornelsen (1826-1884)

coming and subsequent ministry was easily the greatest factor in the origin and founding of our brotherhood.

In 1904 P. M. Friesen wrote, "The Mennonite Brethren Church must acknowledge Pastor Eduard Wuest as its second reformer." The influence of Wuest upon the Mennonite Brethren Church and his contribution to its later growth and development are second only to that of Menno Simons. All who have attempted a history of the Mennonite Brethren Church have been quick to acknowledge that Wuest's ministry, which extended far beyond the confines of his own parish, really prepared the field in which the seeds fell, and from which the spiritual harvest came that led to the founding of our brotherhood.

Wuest's influence on our early brethren was great, and the extent to which his contributions have determined our course during this first century have not been fully set out nor clearly delineated. His ministry providentially led in the direction of the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church. His inaugural sermon preached in his new pastoral charge in Neu-Hoffnungsfeld (heard by many Mennonites who had come for the important occasion) contained intimations of a pure church of baptized believers. What he said must lead, if followed through, to a church of "*gläubig getaufte Brueder*" (baptized believing brethren). In his sermon there were clear implications of an eventual separation of true believers from any church that is spiritually dead. Yet Wuest did not speak to a given situation in Mennonite churches in the Molotschna colony, of which he had no knowledge. At best he spoke out of his own background and to the situation in his own new pastoral charge. Above all, he spoke, we believe, under the leading of the

Holy Spirit words that had larger application and that pointed the way for the brethren in 1860.

He gave further impetus to the brethren movement. He actively promoted the fellowship meetings and personally participated in them. He promoted interest in missions by continuing a practice of long standing—joint harvest-mission festivals held in his own church and in Gnadenfeld. His evangelistic ministry was the means of salvation for many who later became members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and it provided a pattern for the preaching ministry as it has developed in our brotherhood.

For the major part of his fourteen-year ministry in South Russia, Wuest was a leading spiritual force among the brethren. Wuest died on July 13, 1859 after a brief illness. Thereafter the brethren in the Mennonite churches began to assume leadership and to take the initiative in their spiritual life and fellowship.

First the brethren requested of Elder August Lenzmann of the Gnadenfeld Church the privilege of a separate communion service, because it was against their conscience and contrary to their understanding of Scripture to partake of the Lord's Supper together with others who led dissolute lives. The request was not granted.

On a Sunday in November, 1859, a group of brethren of various Mennonite congregations in the villages of the Molotschna colony met in the home of one Cornelius Wiens in Elisabeththal and held a private communion service without the assistance of a duly appointed Mennonite elder. This action was the first outward protest of the brethren against the worldliness and spiritual laxity existing in the Mennonite churches of their day.

The reaction in the villages, after the matter became public knowledge, was bitterly negative. It provoked sharp criticism. In some churches the participants were summarily excommunicated. In the Gnadenfeld church, council meetings of the clergy and leaders of the new movement—Johann Claassen and Jacob Reimer—were held on December 19 and 27. Six members of the Gnadenfeld congregation had been admonished regarding their participation in the private communion service. (Claassen and Reimer had not been present in Elisabeththal.) During the discussion over this matter the bitter opposition to this new movement came into expression and vented itself upon Claassen and Reimer. These brethren were required to retire from the meeting, and with them their sympathizers also. The Gnadenfeld church lost about twenty-five members through this sad action, and the brethren were forced into a position from which they must seek a further way.

On January 6, 1860, in Elisabeththal, eighteen brethren, including Johann Claassen, signed a document deploring the spiritual laxity in the existing Mennonite Church and declaring their severance from that church. This Document of Secession was



formulated by Abraham Cornelsen, a teacher in Elisabeththal.

On January 18 nine other brethren, among them Jacob Reimer, concurred with the Document of Secession. Thus a total of twenty-seven family heads formed the initiating group of brethren who set out to found a new church which in composition and function was to adhere to the teachings of the Word of God. Very clearly expressed in the statement was also their position with regard to the Anabaptist tradition, "In confession of faith we are, according to our convictions from the Holy Scriptures, in full accord with our beloved Menno."

Difficulties beset the newly-formed fellowship from the first. Inwardly the movement had fallen prey, even before Wuest's decease, to a spirit of emotional excesses. This movement, which threatened a wholesome spiritual development in the new group, held that the joy of assurance of salvation must find overt expression in public meetings. Even though some of the leading brethren at first were swept along in this strange tide, it was not long before the danger of uncontrolled emotional excess as a part of public worship was realized. Johann Claassen recognized the danger and in an energetic way freed the new congregations from it.

Dangers came from without. Persecution took the form of social, civil and economic boycott. For many of our brethren this spelled financial ruin. Largely through the efforts of Johann Claassen the new church eventually received state recognition and with that a measure of protection. New settlements of Mennonite Brethren were made in the Kuban area.

Another major step of our history was taken in 1862 when the Chortitza Mennonite Brethren congregation was organized in the older Russian Mennonite colony.

The organization of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church took place May

Elder Abraham Schellenberg  
(1845-1920)

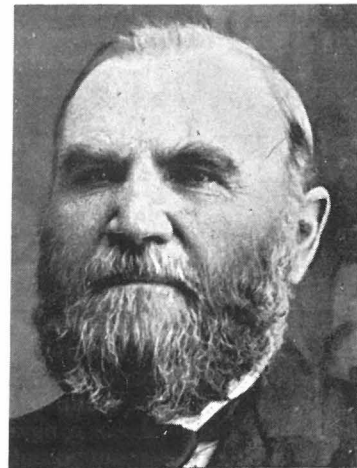


14-16, 1872 at Andreasfeld in the Chortitza colony. The three existing Mennonite Brethren churches participated: Einlage, Chortitza; Rueckenau, Molotschna; and Kuban. The total membership at this time numbered six hundred.

The emigration to America in 1874-80 drew considerably from the membership of the Church, including some of its leading ministers.

When the twen-

ty-fifth anniversary was celebrated in Russia the Mennonite Brethren Church had a membership of 1,800, seven congregations, four elders, and thirty-five other ministers. In the quarter century which followed this anniversary the Mennonites in Russia enjoyed a period of advance in all respects. Industrial and economic expansion was accompanied by a



Elder Heinrich Voth (1851-1918)

rapid advance in education and cultural life. In all of this our brethren kept pace with the rest of the Mennonites in Russia.

By 1910, when the Church in Russia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, it had spread still farther east to include congregations in Orenburg, Russian Turkestan, and Omsk, Siberia. Congregations had also begun in the Crimea and in Poland. The total membership was 6,000.

The third quarter century brought our brethren in Russia the darkest days which our history knows. Russia became involved in World War I on the side of the Allies. The prosecution of the war effort brought to light many weaknesses of the Czarist regime. The strain and turmoil of war lent opportunity to revolutionary forces in Russia to rise, gain in strength, and seize the reins of power. The Russia of the Czars was forcefully remoulded into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Our Mennonite colonies, and with them the Mennonite Brethren, were drawn into the vortex of this vast upheaval with its torture and terror. The period of chaos was followed by famine and pestilence. Untold suffering became the lot of our brethren along with the other Mennonites.

In such a setting our Mennonite Brethren churches and Conference in the U. S. S. R. ceased to function. For leaders and laity it was a despairing situation. Several encouraging aspects emerged, however. A revival swept through many villages resulting in a deepening of the spiritual life and the personal salvation of many. It was a time productive of great spiritual values which remain with us till this day. In a few years of respite from legal restriction there was a bold and very energetic outreach with the Gospel to the Russians.

As time went on it became apparent that there was no future for an organized church and work in the U. S. S. R. The large emigration to Canada took place in the years 1921 to 1930. Brother B. B. Janz in the U. S. S. R. and brethren in North



America worked together, helping 21,000 Mennonites to emigrate to Canada. In 1930 another 4,000 were able to leave via Germany to South America. A further movement of Mennonites out of Russia has taken place during and since World War II.

It is often said that there is no functioning Mennonite Brethren Church in the U. S. S. R. today. That is true, but we are at the same time careful to stress that we have many brethren there. In this way we testify to the truth that the fellowship of true brethren in Christ is a bond stronger to unite, and more abiding, than international boundaries or political circumstances are forces to divide.

### *In the United States of America*

The historical background of the Mennonite Brethren churches of the United States is the Russia of 1860. It was a mere decade and a half after the beginnings in Russia that some 200 Mennonite Brethren families left Russia to settle in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Dakota. They were but a small segment of a large Mennonite emigration which left in the decade following 1874 because of threatening military service in Russia. Altogether 18,000 Mennonites emigrated to North America, about one-third of all Mennonites in Russia, 10,000 settling in the United States and 8,000 in Canada. Half of those coming to the United States settled in Kansas. No Mennonite Brethren of this emigration settled in Canada.

At first the 200 scattered Mennonite Brethren families maintained their spiritual life by the reading of God's Word and prayer in the family circle. Where several families lived together in a community they joined on Sundays for simple worship services in one of the homes.

The first Mennonite Brethren church established in North America was the Ebenezer congregation, east of Buhler, Kansas. Here Mennonite Brethren

settled as early as 1874. In 1878, through a revival, others joined and the group organized as a church. In the summer of 1879 Brother Abraham Schellenberg and twelve other Mennonite Brethren arrived from Russia and united with this church. Brother Schellenberg was now chosen as elder of the church. This congregation became large and was one of the most influential in the early years. In 1921, after it had become the mother church to other churches in Reno, McPherson, and Harvey counties, it united with the church in Buhler.

Other early churches in Kansas were Ebenfeld, in the community southeast of Hillsboro; Goessel, in the Alexanderwohl community in Marion County, now extinct; Lehigh, a branch of the Goessel church, now extinct; the Johannestal congregation, now the Hillsboro church. Here Elder Schellenberg baptized the first converts.

In Nebraska a strong church developed in the area near Henderson, beginning with members settling there in 1876. The first three General Conferences were held in this church.

The first Mennonite Brethren coming to Minnesota settled in Cottonwood County in 1875-76. In 1877 the group elected Heinrich Voth and Johann Wiens as ministers. Later Brother Voth was ordained as elder and served the congregations in that capacity until his death in 1918. The Mountain Lake congregation for a long time was one of the largest in the Conference.

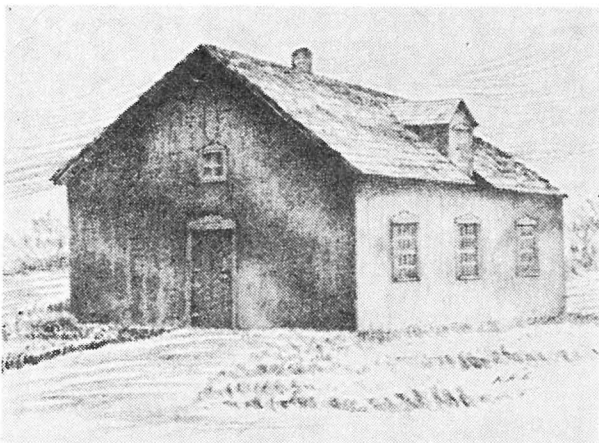
In South Dakota Mennonite Brethren began to settle in Turner County as early as 1876 and organized as a church soon after. It is today known as the Dolton or Silver Lake church.

Prior to 1879 there was little leadership in evidence among the Mennonite Brethren in North America. After that date, however, a number of strong, spiritual leaders came as immigrants, and some leaders emerged from existing congregations. Among the early leaders to whom we should pay tribute in this centennial are the brethren Abraham Schellenberg, Cornelius Wedel, Johann Foth, and David Dyck in Kansas; J. J. Regier in Nebraska; Heinrich Voth in Minnesota; and Heinrich Adrian in South Dakota.

Though the earliest churches were widely scattered, and the means of travel and communication very limited, there was a strong bond of spiritual union among them. A means of spiritual fellowship were the visits of ministers of the larger congregations to smaller groups.

In 1878 four representatives from Kansas and seven from Nebraska met in Nebraska for the purpose of uniting the Mennonite Brethren congregation into a conference. This meeting has not gained recognition as a properly constituted Conference, mainly on two points: the congregations were not properly represented and the position taken by this meeting on several points did not receive general acceptance. The meeting made at least one lasting contribution: it pointed the way towards a duly constituted General Conference.

Pioneer House of Worship.





House of Worship Interior—1960.

This became a reality on October 18-20, 1879, when representative delegates from the churches in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and South Dakota met at Henderson, Nebraska and organized the Conference. A three-fold purpose seems to have guided the brethren in this organization: to build up the churches in their spiritual life, to take a united position on points of doctrine and practice, to work unitedly in various church activities. Elder J. J. Regier of the Henderson congregation served as chairman of this first convention.

These General Conference sessions were held annually from 1879 to 1909. Elder Abraham Schellenberg presided at conferences on eighteen occasions. Elder Heinrich Voth of Minnesota was later frequently elected to preside at the convention. During this period individual congregations grew stronger and new churches were begun in other states and in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It was a period of rich blessings for the churches: frequent revivals and numerous conversions, rapid expansion and growth.

The earliest statistics, which appeared in *Zionsbote* in 1888, give the following figures: churches and places of worship 18, membership 1,266, elders

7, ordained ministers and deacons 29, unordained ministers and deacons 23. Toward the close of the nineteenth century the membership in North America was probably a little over 2,000.

In 1902 the Conference adopted the Confession of Faith which had been published by the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia.

In 1900 the Conference was incorporated under the state laws of Kansas. The Conference of 1906 drew up and adopted a constitution in which our brotherhood is named as "Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America." Since then a number of revisions have been necessary.

Since 1910 the General Conference has convened triennially. The 1910 Conference accepted a complete plan for dividing the Conference into districts. This plan with a few modifications has resulted in the following arrangement: (1) Southern District with churches in Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Texas; (2) Central District with churches in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Montana; (3) Pacific District with churches in California, Oregon, and Washington; (4) Northern District, now Canadian, with churches in five provinces of Canada.



With this development, indicating a trend toward decentralization, the leadership force and potential which had once been oriented toward the work of the General Conference now came to be divided among the programs of the districts. As a compensation for this decentralization the Conference henceforth directed its strongest leadership into the work of the Board of Foreign Missions.

In 1957 delegates from the churches in the Southern, Central, and Pacific Districts met in Reedley, California on October 15 and 16 to form the United States Area Conference. The United States Conference, as it is now called, meets annually and in its work has already effectively dealt with some of the problems which decentralization had brought upon such projects as higher education and publication.

Since 1954 a Board for Evangelism supervises a year-round program of evangelism in the churches, engaging the services of a full-time evangelist. In home missions work the major emphasis now is the establishment of churches in urban areas to which members have gone in the present urbanization trend. These new churches are then also a Gospel outreach in new communities.

The greatest membership growth has taken place in the Pacific District. California, especially the lower San Joaquin Valley as the "largest catch-basin of human migration in history," has also attracted large numbers of our people.

#### *In Canada*

The Canadian District began as a home mission outreach of the brethren in the United States. The Conference appointed Heinrich Voth, David Dyck, and P. H. Wedel to do evangelistic work in Manitoba beginning as early as 1884. This work bore fruit and in 1888 led to the organization of the Winkler M. B. Church, the first in Canada.

In the area west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan a Mennonite settlement from Russia began in 1892. Among these settlers were some Mennonite Brethren. These were augmented by migrations of Mennonite Brethren from Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Dakota. In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth a circuit of Mennonite Brethren churches was formed: Laird, Bruderfeld, Dalmeny, Neu-Hoffnung, Hepburn, Borden, Waldheim, and Aberdeen.

In southern Saskatchewan a number of churches developed in the Herbert area in 1905: Herbert, Main Centre, Greenfarm, Bethania, Ebenezer, Flowing Well, Elim and Woodrow.

The Northern District, as it was then called, convened for the first time at Herbert, Saskatchewan, June 27 and 28, 1910. Thirteen Saskatchewan churches were represented by sixty-five delegates. Elder David Dyck, who now was presiding minister of the Bruderfeld church, was chairman of this first

convention. Brother Benjamin Janz of Main Centre was assistant, and John F. Harms, former editor of *Zionsbote*, who had come to the Herbert area in 1908, was secretary.

In 1913 the churches in Manitoba found it advantageous to withdraw from the Central District and join the Northern District. Conferences were held annually and usually followed the cycle Herbert, Rosthern, Manitoba.

A stable and spiritual leadership developed in the Northern District Conference. David Dyck was active in conference work, usually serving as chairman during the first fifteen years. David H. Klassen, Borden, and Jacob Lepp, Dalmeny, rendered valuable service in the churches and in the Conference. In the Herbert circuit Benjamin Janz, J. W. Thiessen, John F. Harms and H. A. Neufeld were early leaders. In Manitoba Johann Warkentin was the outstanding leader of the Winkler church and a strong representative of Conference work.

The Northern District Conference sustained a close relationship to the General Conference. There were many close, direct ties between the membership of the churches in the North and the membership of those in the South.

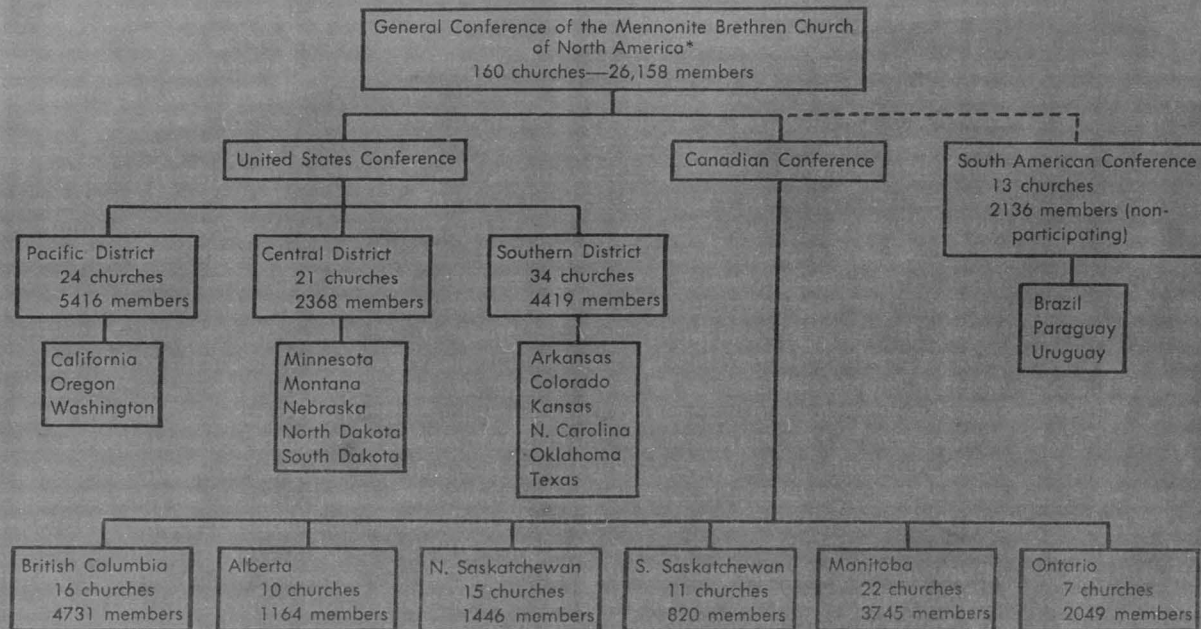
*The Immigration from 1923 to 1930* — About 21,000 Mennonites came to Canada from 1923 to 1930. Many of them were Mennonite Brethren. This addition to the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada left its mark on the congregations in the provinces and modified the pattern of Conference work. Many congregations increased in membership and gained much needed strength. Among the new members were many gifted and well-educated ministers and teachers. The experience through which these immigrants had passed in Russia added a spiritual dimension to their lives. All of this wealth came into the Canadian brotherhood. The entire work received a new complexion and a new leadership eventually evolved.

New congregations sprang up in new locations — in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia. In the process of time the churches in each of the five provinces organized as provincial conferences (Saskatchewan retaining two such conferences).

After World War II there was a further immigration of Mennonites from Europe to Canada. Among these there were some who preferred to join Mennonite Brethren churches, mostly in cities.

In recent decades a membership shift has been noticeable from the prairie provinces to Ontario, and in much larger measure to British Columbia. Today approximately one-third of the Canadian membership lies within a very small radius in the lower Fraser Valley. Another membership shift has been to the city churches. This is perhaps nowhere more noticeable than in Winnipeg and Vancouver. The rural and smaller churches have become feeder stations for the large city churches.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH



\*1959 statistics, including K. M. B. churches and members

In the matter of language use in church services, the churches in Canada stand on the threshold of a transition from German to English. A number of churches have already completed the transition, others are now bilingual.

### *In South America*

The South American District Conference held its ninth annual convention in this centennial year. The official organization took place twelve years ago. There are thirteen fully organized churches in the countries of Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. There are Conference committees to represent home missions, education, Sunday schools, music, and youth work. There is also a board of trustees and a constitution committee. The Conference executive is made up of Gerhard Balzer, Fernheim, moderator; Tobias Foth, El Ombu, assistant moderator; Andreas Balzer, Fernheim, secretary; H. B. Friesen, Fernheim, treasurer. The membership now stands at 2,136, an increase of twenty-one per cent during the past two years. Under the further blessing of God it may be expected that the churches in South America will grow to make a distinct contribution to our brotherhood.

### *Merger with the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren*

The culmination of the merger of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference with our Conference in this centennial year is a cause for rejoicing. The bonds of Christian love and fellowship have been strengthened, and we are encouraged for the task God has entrusted to us.

Already in the early years of our history in America there were expressions of a desire for a merger of the two groups. Basic to this desire was a unity in Biblical doctrine and practice. In the work of foreign missions and in higher education we have been closely associated.

In 1949 the Committee of Reference and Counsel of our Conference submitted a formal invitation to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference toward a merger. The response was in the form of a request for a workable and constructive plan. In 1957 the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren formally voted in favor of a merger. By 1960 plans for the merger were finalized. A full integration of our several efforts in foreign missions, higher education, and publication was effected. At the centennial observance in Reedley, November 13-16, an appropriate ceremony shall mark the merger and bring it to consummation.



## MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA



The geographic distribution of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America—north, south, east, west. Each dot represents one M. B. Church.

# The Board of Reference and Counsel

“ . . . taking the oversight thereof” (1 Peter 5:2).

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

The Lord not only purchased His church with His own blood but He also bestowed upon His beloved various gifts, among these the gift of administration and spiritual concern. In the history of our brotherhood these gifts have been in evidence from the very beginning.

In North America the brethren who led in the founding and organization of the earliest churches manifested a true, spiritual concern for these groups of believers. A reading of the early Conference reports reveals that difficult and grave questions in the churches challenged our leading brethren from the beginning. The method of dealing with these was simple and direct, and displays the spiritual courage and initiative of the early leadership. The problems were brought to the Conference floor in the form of submitted questions (*eingereichte Fragen*). These were then quite openly discussed and decided upon.

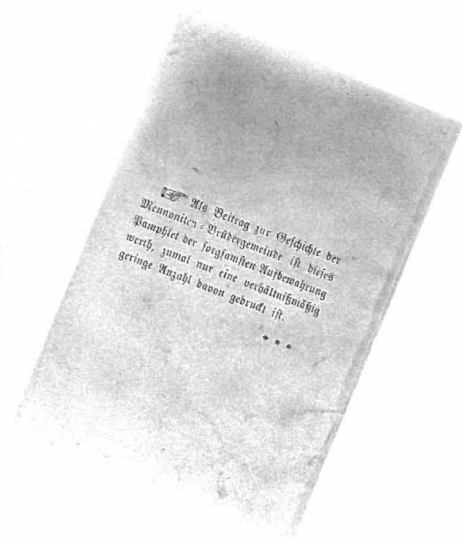
In 1915 at the thirty-third Conference a change in procedure from this direct approach came into being. In order to save time for the Conference a committee of five brethren was appointed to study the submitted questions and to make recommendations to the Conference. For the next several Conference sessions variations of this method were used, but always the appointed committee served only for the duration of the sessions.

At the thirty-seventh Conference held in 1927 a further development is noticeable. Nine brethren were appointed to study the submitted questions, and the committee was called a *Fuersorgekomitee* (Committee of Reference and Counsel). At the 1930 Conference a *Fuersorgekomitee* of nine brethren was again appointed to deal with the submitted questions. Later during this session the Conference voted to establish a permanent *Fuersorgekomitee* consisting of nine members, each to serve for nine years. In the first election three brethren were elected for nine years, three for six years, and three for three years.

At present our constitution calls for a Board of Reference and Counsel consisting of ten members:



An Early Conference Report. Note on back cover points up historic significance of conference reports.







General Conference sessions regulate the work of our brotherhood.

the three Conference officers and seven others elected for a period of six years.

"The Board of Reference and Counsel is entrusted with the sacred charge of promoting the spiritual life of the Conference. It watches over the spiritual welfare of the churches and advises and aids them when serious questions . . . arise." The Board sustains a vital relation to the organization of the district conferences in order to maintain a functional unity and spiritual harmony throughout the entire brotherhood. In this way difficult questions and problems from individual churches and district conferences have been referred to this Board for consideration and help. The questions have concerned themselves with varied subjects—nonresistance, divorce, and remarriage, church polity, church dissension, our relationship to outside organizations and movements, and many other matters of common concern.

The Board also serves as Interim Authority and as such it is authorized to deal with all matters that arise during the interim between conventions of the Conference for which no other provision has been made.

During the last three years the Board has con-

ducted a significant series of study conferences. These have been held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, December, 1957; Denver, Colorado, July, 1958; Herbert, Saskatchewan, July, 1959. At these meetings the Board as the sponsoring agency and a number of leading brethren, pastors and educators, as invited participants constituted the personnel for the work of these study conferences. A findings committee recorded the significant aspects of these discussions as a modification, qualification, or alteration to the papers presented. In the three conferences referred to a total of twenty papers have been thus processed.

The entire proceeding is a serious attempt on the part of the Board to help our brotherhood to determine and clearly spell out our theological position and doctrinal viewpoints. The primary occasion for these study conferences is the assignment of the writing of a full statement of Mennonite Brethren theology. These study conferences shall furnish background material for this writing, and will serve as a guide so that the statement of theology will be an accurate representation of the lines of faith and doctrine which are laid down in the life of our brotherhood.

These study conferences have come at a time when many of our brethren hold the advantage of advanced theological and secular training, and have at hand academic tools. Some are equipped to produce a theological treatise and others to critically evaluate it. The significance for our brotherhood, of these study conferences and the subsequent theology, has thus far not been fully delineated. This is a task that needs to be done as we set about the assignment of writing our theology.

In the particular type of church polity according to which we function as a brotherhood and Conference the evolution of a Board of Reference and Counsel has been a normal development. The organization of this Board grew out of distinct needs. As these needs were met the spiritual life of our brotherhood could prosper.

Mennonite Brethren in South America meet in conference for work and fellowship.



# Foreign Missions

Missions is an integral part of the Mennonite Brethren Church. It is incorporated in our concept of the Christian life. Missions is a natural expression of a Christian duty and privilege. This was so from the very beginning of the movement. Years before an organization was effected for a more regulated work, members by their own initiative engaged in evangelism and brought the Gospel to their neighbors. This emphasis upon missions has never ceased, and numerous members have volunteered for foreign and home mission service, while others have contributed of their means to make the work possible. At present the denomination has undertaken an almost impossible task compared with its relatively small constituency.

From the very beginning the spiritual life of the brotherhood was characterized by a missionary concern. The brotherhood interceded for lost humanity and prayed the Lord of the Harvest to call forth workers from its ranks. The missionaries who went to proclaim the Gospel to peoples in 'gross darkness,' came back to the constituency periodically to "rehearse all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the heathen." Their experiences and reports of the results of the proclamation of the Gospel in other lands moved the Conference to further action in the cause of missions.

It may be said humbly that by God's grace the brotherhood considers the missionary outreach of the Conference to be of vital importance. The missionary outreach of the brotherhood to lost humanity has served as a unifying spiritual factor which has helped to minimize tendencies to divide on less important issues. The foreign missions program of the Conference has been used of God to keep the brotherhood spiritually dynamic, evangelical and evangelistic. This has challenged the churches to give sons and daughters for the Lord in foreign lands and to make extensive financial contributions.

## *Beginnings*

The Mennonite Brethren Church originated in the midst of a spiritual awakening in the Mennonite communities of South Russia. This awakening was but a part of the larger religious awakening in

many areas of Western Europe, England and North America. As elsewhere in the Christian Church, this awakening was also accompanied by a revival of mission interest. In its founding the Mennonite Brethren Church fell heir to this interest in a missionary outreach.

The awakened mission interest in the Mennonite Brethren Church expressed itself most energetically and mainly along four definite avenues.

1. Mission prayer circles functioned in many communities for regular mission studies and intercession for the Lord's cause.

2. Financial contributions were gathered for the support of various mission causes and mission societies.

3. An energetic program for the propagation of the Gospel in the various Mennonite settlements in Russia and America was undertaken. Because of this the Mennonite Brethren Church has attracted more followers than many other secession movements. The Gospel was preached to neighboring communities wherever and whenever possible. Thus in America the large German Lutheran fields of North Dakota, the Russian settlements of the United States and Canada and somewhat later the Indians of Oklahoma became fertile fields of evangelism and church building. In Russia attempts were made to serve the Russian people with the Gospel and to assist Russian leaders to minister to their own people.

4. The major expression, however, came in the sending forth of men and women into the so-called mission fields of the world. This has eventually resulted in the commissioning of hundreds of young people who have entered eleven mission fields under the direction and with the support of the Conference. Numerous other individuals are serving with various denominational and interdenominational societies. This interesting and stimulating story of zeal, sacrifice, heroism, courage, faith and wisdom now follows.

## *Beginnings in Russia*

The brethren instituted an aggressive program of evangelism in Russia in the Mennonite colonies and assisted in the evangelism of Russian neighbors.





A baptism on the mission field is visible fruit of the Gospel.

Evangelism among Russians was beset with many hazards because of government restrictions on "proselytizing" among the members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Because of this limitation the mission interest looked for an expression beyond the borders of Russia.

*India*—The first foreign mission field to be entered by Mennonite Brethren was India. Brother and Sister Abram Friesen of Nieder-Chortiza left from Russia for India in October, 1889. With the kind co-operation of the American Baptists, Brother Friesen established himself in Nalgonda in the southeastern part of the former Mohammedan Kingdom of Hyderabad, now Andhra Pradesh. A fruitful ministry resulted. As more personnel arrived in the field the area of ministry was expanded and Sooriapet and Jangaon were established as further centers.

The mission followed the established pattern and carried on evangelism, church building, education and medical work under the special blessing of God.

The Lord enabled the Russian Mennonite Brethren Church to send forth seven couples and three single ladies to serve as missionaries in India. With the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent Russian Revolution, the home constituency and missionaries on the field became permanently separated and the work and workers were transferred to the American Baptist Missionary Union.

Thus the missionary ministry of the Russian Mennonite Brethren Church in India ended. Later part of this field became the responsibility of the American Mennonite Brethren Church.

#### *Beginnings in America*

*Small Beginnings*—From the very beginning of its existence on the new continent the American Mennonite Brethren Church manifested an interest in foreign missions. For several years contributions were sent to various mission societies. In 1884 Rev. G. N. Thomssen, American Bap-

tist missionary to India, challenged the Conference to assume responsibility for supporting a national worker with \$100 annually. The project was accepted with enthusiasm. In the following years the ministry was expanded and soon the Conference supported six nationals in India.

Africa, especially German Cameroons, also received early attention and in 1887 \$100 were sent there. This was increased to \$200 in 1889.

In the early 1890's the Baptists of Germany organized a work in the Cameroons with Rev. August Steffens of America as pioneer. Since Rev. Steffens was known to the Mennonite Brethren, financial help came forth readily and somewhat later he was joined by two Mennonite Brethren couples with considerable financial support from their home conference. These couples were Brother and Sister Peter H. Wedel and Brother and Sister Henry Enns, whose services were cut short by death and illness within a few years.

*Moving Towards Independent Work*—It soon became evident that the method of merely being contributors to other missions did not satisfy the churches nor did it build a vigorous Conference. The Conference, therefore, launched its own program of missions, at first rather hesitatingly but soon courageously shouldering the responsibility of an independent mission. Progressively through the years the Conference has sent forth laborers and opened up a number of mission fields.

*Indiahoma*—Pioneering was done at Indiahoma, Oklahoma, among the Comanche Indians. The Conference entered this field in 1894.

*India*—India was entered in 1899 by Brother and Sister N. N. Hiebert and Sisters Elisabeth Neufeld and Anna Suderman.

*China*—Somewhat later, in 1911, Brother and Sister Frank J. Wiens entered into a large field in South China among the Hakkas independently of the Conference Board, but with finances from the churches. In 1919 the Conference assumed responsibility for this field.

*Africa—Congo*—In 1911 Brother and Sister Aaron A. Janzen went to Africa to labor with the Congo Inland Mission. In 1922 they disassociated themselves from this mission to begin a work which they hoped the Conference would support. Independently, heroically, sacrificially they labored under the signal blessings of God, patiently waiting for their Conference to act in their favor. Their hopes were finally realized when in 1943 the Conference voted to assume responsibility for the work.

In the meantime Brother and Sister Henry Bartsch of Canada had followed the Janzens to the Congo. They entered a new field, known as the Bololo field. Brother Bartsch, with the help of other brethren, organized a missionary association within the Mennonite Brethren constituency of Canada. The association, known as the Africa Mission-

ary Society, was incorporated under the laws of Canada and functioned effectively. A number of missionaries were sent out by this society.

This mission work also was received into the Conference in 1943. The Africa Missionary Society transferred workers, field and funds to the Conference and soon thereafter dissolved.

*Paraguay*—The work among the Indians of the Chaco was commenced by the Mennonite colonists who had escaped from Russia and settled in the Chaco in the early 1930's.

As early as 1932 these people became interested in the evangelization of the Lengua Indians who were roaming the bush, begging in the villages, and working occasionally for the Mennonite colonists. The early beginnings, however, were thwarted by the Chaco Bolivian-Paraguayan war.

In 1935 the colonists succeeded in organizing an association to conduct a mission to these copper-brown people. Brother and Sister Gerhard Giesbrecht as missionaries labored faithfully in the midst of great difficulties to acquire the language and to build a mission center. Obtaining permission and favor from the government they established Yalwe Sanga, about twenty-five miles south of the Fernheim Colony. The Lord prospered the work greatly.

Because of pressing poverty the Paraguayan colonists appealed to the Mennonite Brethren Conference to assume the direction and support of this work and the transfer was made in 1945. At present the work is conducted jointly by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Conference and a Committee of the Paraguayan Mission Association.

#### *Development of the Fields*

World War II temporarily halted the advancement of the foreign missions ministry. Technically the Conference was only responsible for three fields—Indiahoma, India and China. Practically, however, Congo and Paraguay were also being supported. With the end of the war in prospect, the Conference felt the time was at hand to make a major thrust, and preparations were begun for great advances in foreign missions.

At the 1943 conference in Buhler, Kansas, the Conference authorized a program of advancement, and the Board of Foreign Missions assumed responsibility for the work in the Congo of Africa with the directives to expand the field as rapidly as possible. Further, authorization was granted to explore the needs and possibilities in Latin America and open mission activities in countries to the south.

As a result, five Latin American countries have been entered. The mission program begun in the Chaco of Paraguay in the early 1930's has been extended to Asuncion. Work in the province of Parana in Brazil was authorized in 1945. Work was un-

dertaken in Colombia in 1945 and has reached the Colombians in the Valle province and the scattered Negroes and Indians of the Choco province. Begun in 1950, the work in Mexico has included evangelism, church building, a Bible school and a medical ministry. In 1953 our Conference began broadcasting daily German programs over radio station HCJB, Quito, Ecuador, in collaboration with the World Radio Missionary Fellowship.

Though all the fields in Latin America are relatively new, more than fifty missionaries have already been commissioned to work in those ripe harvest fields. To the usual four-point missionary program of evangelism, church building, Christian education and medical work has been added a large and well-recognized orphanage at Curitiba, Brazil.

More recent than most of the Latin American work is the mission in Osaka, Japan. Begun as a relief center in 1948, the work now includes six preaching points. Several of them have already matured into organized churches. A weekly radio program contributes greatly toward the program of the work. Summer camps, too, are proving a great blessing.

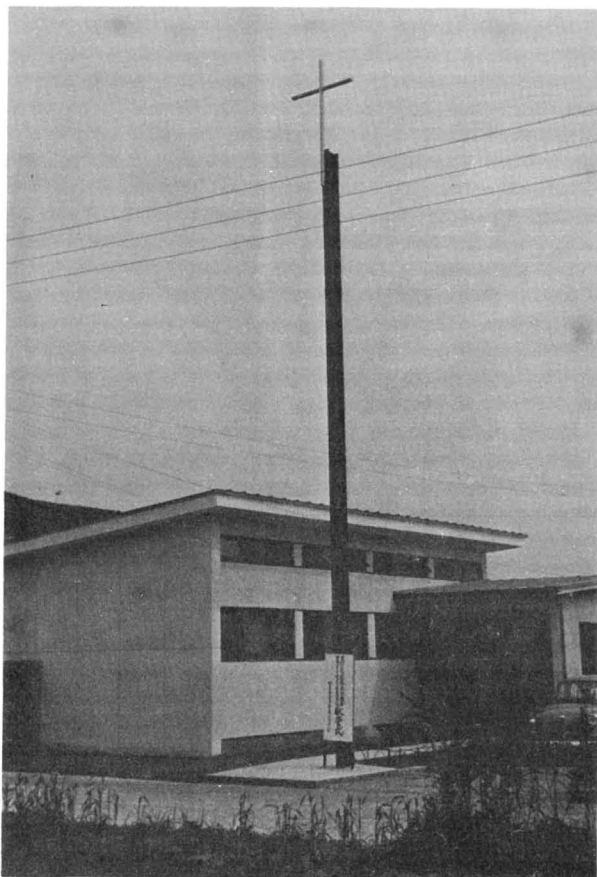
The last field into which the Lord has led the Conference is Europe with several centers in Germany and Austria. The work in Europe was begun in 1953.

#### *The Fields*

It is fair to speak of the Mennonite Brethren Church as a world brotherhood though it numbers only fifty to fifty-five thousand adult members (plus an undetermined number behind the Iron

The Post Oak Church symbolizes the beginning of our outreach in foreign missions.





A church in Ishibashi demonstrates that the Gospel can take root wherever men are found.

and Bamboo Curtains). These live scattered on five continents—North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia; represent four major races—white, red, yellow and black; and speak thirteen languages.

The development of the various national churches and conferences differs considerably according to fields:

*Indiahoma*—The Indiahoma church of Comanche Indian is now organized as an autonomous body. Though several hundred have been saved through the ministry of the mission many have died while others have left the reservation. The present membership numbers some fifty baptized adults. The church has been fully integrated into the Southern District Conference.

*India*—India, the second field, has progressed marvelously. The present membership of the Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church numbers upward of 24,000 baptized believers. It is organized into a convention and guided by a Governing Council. The Council consists of more than twenty brethren elected by eight field associations which

through the years have grown up around eight mission stations. It is almost completely nationalized, though subsidized heavily from America. In collaboration with a North American mission staff, the Indian Convention guides some seventy organized churches, numerous smaller groups of believers and an evangelism program. It also conducts educational institutions, including a high school, a Bible institute and numerous village schools; produces some literature on its own printing press; operates an extensive medical program and distributes considerable relief to needy believers. Recently the work has been incorporated in India and mission property is being transferred as rapidly as possible and advisable. The mission-station pattern has given way to the church-centered ministry.

The work has been wonderfully blessed, but it needs our continued assistance in personnel, finances and especially in intercession. The work of evangelism is not nearly completed. Neither are the local congregations sufficiently mature to struggle independently of sympathetic help. Our Indian brethren are shouldering the burden of responsibility, but the weight is too heavy. We must continue to help them carry the load.

*China*—Little can be said about China. When the last missionaries escaped in 1951, they left behind an organized indigenous church of several hundred members. We have reason to believe that many believers are surviving the pressure and are living witnesses for their Lord in Communist territory.

It should be said here that large groups of Hakka people have escaped to Indonesia. A convert of our mission has been successful in opening some ten preaching centers among these refugees and is laboring with success in their midst.

*Congo*—Through the efforts of more than seventy missionaries and a number of fine national co-laborers, seven centers of operation have been opened. Some 6,000 believers have been baptized and churches have been organized. A Bible institute, a teacher-training school, a school for missionary children, two hospitals, several dispensaries and a network of lower-level schools have been established. Considerable literature is being published for schools and churches. For all this we praise the Lord.

Since our Conference accepted this field only in 1943 the work is not as advanced as we wish, so it might better weather the present national storm. It must be pointed out, however, that the mission has accepted responsibility for four centers previously operated by independent missionaries. Thus a goodly number of advanced Christians are found on the field.

Only one stable field association has grown up, but no over-all conference has been organized previous to independence, nor had a governing council of national brethren been established. The work



was mostly in the hands of the missionaries. Negotiations at first proceeded in a satisfactory manner but shortly after independence day, June 30, rioting broke out in various centers, division wracked the new republic, and due to resulting chaotic conditions our missionary staff was forced to leave. Should a re-entry be possible under more ordered political circumstances, it is clear that the work would assume an altered character.

**Paraguay**—The mission operates in two sections and ministers to two entirely different types of people. The larger work is carried on in the Chaco among three primitive Indian tribes—the Lenguas, Chulupies and Tobas. Eighteen missionaries are ministering at four centers and at several posts. Remarkable movements towards Christianity have been witnessed and at each center an appealing church building has been erected by these copper-brown people. Attendance is regular and interest is very good. A goodly number have come to a clear knowledge of Christ as their personal Savior while others need more instruction to embrace Christianity intelligently. Approximately 3,000 to 3,500 Indians are being reached from the various centers.

In Asuncion, where work is carried on among the Paraguayans, a church of believers has been organized and the work is progressing well. Approximately thirty believers have been baptized.

It must be mentioned that the South American District Conference has agreed to assume the administrative responsibility for the work among the Indians in the Chaco with annual financial subsidies from North America. The expanding work of evangelism and church-building in the city of Asuncion remains the responsibility of the Board of Foreign Missions of North America.



Tent evangelism brings the Gospel to the people.

**Brazil**—The work of Brazil has until very recently revolved mainly around the large orphanage near the city of Curitiba. By strengthening the staff it is becoming possible to enlarge the work. A Bible institute and a program of aggressive rural evangelism are being developed.

A fine church near the orphanage has grown up. Several groups of believers in rural areas are affiliated with the mission and look to the mission for guidance and assistance. The work is fairly well indigenized.

**Colombia**—The church in Colombia has survived the vicious attacks of the Evil One and is at present progressing rapidly. The minimum missionary staff of 19 members is distributed in three main centers — Cali, La Cumbre, and Istmina. As early as 1953 a Mennonite Brethren Conference was organized. Because of the heavy persecution and much suffering, the church membership was greatly depleted and hampered in a forward march. At present, however, a national leadership aggressively promotes the work of evangelism and church building. Since the work has been nationalized from the very beginning, satisfactory progress and development is to be expected.

Besides assisting in evangelism and church building, the mission operates a Bible institute in Cali, Colegio los Andes in LaCumbre, and a dispensary and a bookshop in the Choco. It also assists the national church in conducting several day schools.

**Ecuador**—The ministry of the Word over radio station HCJB is carried on with a staff of several members. The effects and results of this ministry are more difficult to evaluate in terms of conversions and church building. Sufficient evidences are at hand to encourage the Board and the workers in this type of ministry. Of special interest are the many letters from behind the Iron Curtain which testify of great blessings coming from the radio programs.

FOREIGN MISSION FIELDS AT A GLANCE

| Field                     | Begun | Baptized Believers | Places of Worship | National Workers | Missionaries | Annual Budget |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Brazil                    | 1946  | 110                | 3                 | 1                | 11           | \$ 20,000     |
| China                     | 1919  | 1,000?             |                   |                  |              |               |
| Colombia                  | 1945  | 250                | 7                 | 10               | 18           | 30,000        |
| Congo                     | 1943  | 6,000              | 234               | 259              | 71           | 120,000       |
| Ecuador                   | 1953  |                    |                   |                  | 6            | 11,000        |
| Europe                    | 1953  | 200                | 5                 | 2                | 16           | 20,000        |
| India                     | 1899  | 24,000             | 150               | 270              | 36           | 100,000       |
| Japan                     | 1948  | 210                | 6                 | 6                | 12           | 30,000        |
| Mexico<br>(and So. Texas) | 1950  | 450                | 8                 | 15               | 10           | 35,000        |
| Paraguay                  | 1945  | 550                | 6                 | 10               | 21           | 20,000        |

*Mexico*—The field of Mexico was entered in 1950 and a center was secured in the small city of Nuevo Ideal in the state of Durango. Missionaries established medical work, a Bible institute and several preaching centers. A fine group of young people have been trained and are now ministering in various localities. The church has grown and is now completely under national care.

A second center in Piedras Negras, was joined to the work and soon a group of believers from San Miguel also applied for admission to the fellowship.

To this triangle a larger group of Latin believers and churches of South Texas has been added and a Latin Mennonite Brethren Conference is in its formative stages.

The latter is a group of churches resulting from the home missions activities of the Southern District Conference which are completely nationalized. Prospects are good that a vigorous church will soon carry on an extensive work in Mexico and among the Latin people of South Texas. A larger Bible institute and a medical center with a modern hospital for Durango are in the planning stages. A medical doctor and several nurses have been appointed for Mexico.

*Japan*—Osaka forms the center of operation in Japan. Twelve missionaries and several nationals carry on a strong preaching and teaching mission. Groups of believers have been gathered. Four new houses of worship have been erected and several churches organized. A Bible institute is being operated and a seminary program being developed. The aggressive leadership of several national brethren gives promise of a strong Mennonite Brethren movement emerging in Japan.

*Europe*—Europe constitutes a challenge. The mission work consists largely of evangelism and church building. There is need for a training center for

workers and the production of certain types of literature.

A group of sixteen brethren and sisters from North America and several continental brethren are engaged in evangelism, Bible conference work and pastoral ministry. Congregations or groups of believers are located in Neuwied and Neustadt in Germany, and in Linz, Wels and Steyr in Austria. Several other preaching points are visited as time permits. In June, 1960 a delegation met in Neuwied to unite as a Mennonite Brethren Conference. A three-year plan foresees the establishment of several more churches, the development of a conference center with a Bible institute, book center, Bible conference facilities, radio studios and publication possibilities. Prospects seem to point in the direction of a stable and progressive ministry.

#### *Development of Administration*

The missionary outreach of the Mennonite Brethren Church from its inception was a spontaneous expression of its Scriptural faith and personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. The early years of our mission history indicate a fully congregational structure of administration. The administrative committee of the Conference with representation from all local congregations (their number at the time was limited), constituted the administrative channel at home. The Conference retained the privilege of all major decisions affecting selection of fields and appointment of all personnel. The missionaries on the field carried the responsibility for the method of work, pattern of program and standard of accomplishment.

Much of the pioneering in America was done by Elder Abraham Schellenberg of Buhler, Kansas. Brother Schellenberg was a great driving force in

A golden jubilee on a mission field speaks of years of sacrificial missionary labor.



the early history of the Conference, especially in evangelism, in stabilizing the churches and in organization. But there were other brethren who made great contributions to the administration and promotion of foreign missions in the churches during the early years. Among them were D. D. Ediger, Johann Foth, J. F. Harms, N. N. Hiebert, J. J. Regier, Heinrich Voth and Cornelius Wedel.

The growth of the organization and administration of foreign missions may conveniently be divided into four periods:

1. *Orientation—1885-1896*—The main responsibility of the Committee in this period was to administer the treasury.

2. *Stabilization—1896-1903*—A Board of five members was elected in 1896. It was their duty to keep an open eye for young people whom the Lord would call to service in foreign countries, to take such steps as would become necessary to open work in foreign fields and to place such young people. At various times the Board was surrounded by a temporary directorate to serve in an advisory capacity.

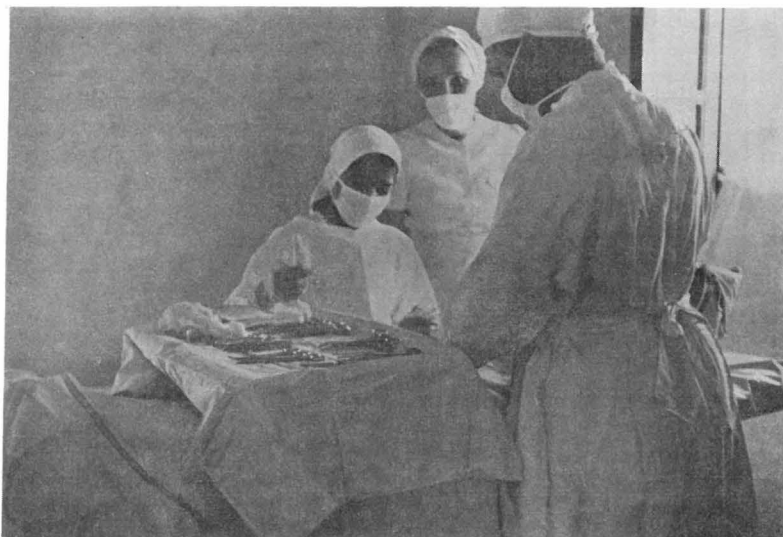
The vigorous work of this Board can be seen in that during these years the Conference:

- a. Extended its work into India (1898);
- b. Adopted a constitution to guide the work (1900);
- c. Acquired a charter and became incorporated under the laws of the State of Kansas as the "Mennonite Brethren Mission Union" (1900);
- d. Created an endowment fund to stabilize and bolster the foreign missions treasury (1900).

3. *Direct Conference Administration—1903-1936*—In 1903 several changes were effected. The Conference decided:

- a. To revise the constitution.
- b. To study the need for amendments to the bylaws of the charter. In the following years several changes were undertaken, and finally in 1908 a revised constitution was adopted. In 1909 a petition for an amendment to the original charter was filed with the state charter board in Topeka, Kansas. The request was granted and the organization became known as "The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America."
- c. To organize the administrative body into three inter-related bodies:
  - 1) An executive committee consisting of four members.
  - 2) A Board of Directors consisting of nine members, including the above four.
  - 3) An administrative committee consisting of sixty members representing the various local congregations.

During this period the following brethren served as chairmen: Abraham Schellenberg 1903-1907, Heinrich Voth 1907-1918, H. W. Lohrenz 1919-1936.



The healing ministry is a vital aspect of missionary work.

Throughout these years Brother N. N. Hiebert continued to serve as secretary while Brother J. W. Wiens was secretary from 1912-1936.

4. *Centralization—1936-*—The need for fuller coordination of the various mission interests was recognized at this time. A new constitution adopted by the Conference in 1936 regulated the foreign missions work in greater detail and also affected the administration considerably. The directorate and the executive committee were dissolved and a Board of Foreign Missions of five members with far-reaching responsibilities was established. The administrative responsibility was vested in an executive secretary-treasurer. Brother H. W. Lohrenz filled this important post from 1936 until 1945 and was succeeded by Brother A. E. Janzen who carried this responsibility until 1957. After 1957 Brother Janzen served as treasurer and member of the administrative secretariat until August 1, 1960.

The post-war expansion necessitated a further change in the administrative structure. The Board of Foreign Missions was enlarged from five to nine members in 1954, and an administration in the form of a secretariat was created in 1957. Serving as the administrative secretariat at the time of the centennial conference are the brethren J. B. Toews, general secretary; John C. Ratzlaff, associate general secretary; and P. J. Funk, finance secretary.

With the spiritual growth of the total missionary outreach, there has arisen the necessity for a re-evaluation of the basic field principles and policies of mission operation. This concern found expression in the historical document adopted by the 1957 General Conference at Yarrow. This statement submitted to the brotherhood by the Board of Foreign Missions reflects strongly the revolutionary world changes with their effects upon the total





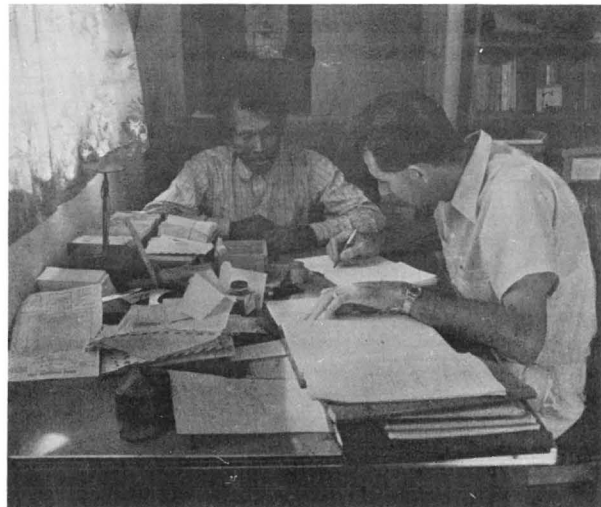
The light of the Word illumines hearts and minds. To provide the Word for those who have never read or heard takes painstaking gathering of linguistic data.

mission philosophy and approach. These circumstances have called for some basic reorganization in the mission outreach and method of operation. These re-evaluations resulted in the new statement of principles and policies adopted by the Board of Foreign Missions in 1960.

The enlarged missionary outreach has also resulted in increased interest in the constituency and this has called for a systematic deputational ministry as well as more literature and visual aids in the churches concerning the great missionary program. This need was met by the appointment of a deputation secretary to keep the challenge of foreign missions before the constituency by visits to the churches, by conducting and promoting mission conferences, by coordinating the various deputational visits, and by promoting and encouraging the production of missionary literature and visual aids. It is the conviction of the Board of Foreign Missions that as long as the spiritual life will be kept vital, the whole counsel of God taught in the churches and the constituency kept informed, the mission cause will advance in and through the Mennonite Brethren Church.

#### *Present Strength and Status of the Work*

It is not easy to evaluate and state in summary the strength and status of the work. It may be said that the Mennonite Brethren Conference has assumed the responsibility for the evangelization of some ten to twelve million people. Of course, it does not expect to do this through North American missionaries only. The mission rather aims at building indigenous churches which are to evangelize their communities.



*Personnel*—More than 270 missionaries have been commissioned to preach the Gospel in lands abroad. Many of these have gone to their reward while others have returned or retired. At present more than 200 are listed as active missionaries. To these, of course, must be added a roster of several hundred national brethren who have first been won to the Lord then trained in the mission institutions and are now faithfully discharging their responsibilities to their own people in various capacities and positions.

*Treasury*—The present budget calls for some \$630,000 annually. All of this must come from some 25,000 members in Canada and the United States and some 2,000 members of the South American Conference. This constitutes a remarkable growth from \$40.77 contributed in 1883.

Thus the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America (Canada and the United States) and the Mennonite Brethren District Conference of South America (settled in Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay from Russia and Poland after 1930) operate mission work on five continents, have gathered some 25,000 to 30,000 believers in churches with a parish of some ten to twelve million souls, have over a period of some seventy years sent forth more than 270 missionaries into eleven mission fields and have developed a world brotherhood.

May it please the Lord to intensify the efforts of world evangelism.

#### *The Challenge of the Future*

The space age, which has brought all nations into the framework of a world community, exerts a revolutionary influence upon world evangelism.

Nations and people who only a quarter of a century ago were isolated and lived in a setting of pagan cultures, beliefs, superstitions and witchcraft are now the objects of world influence. Modern ideologies of nationalism, communism, atheism and free world enterprise bid for their minds and loyalties.

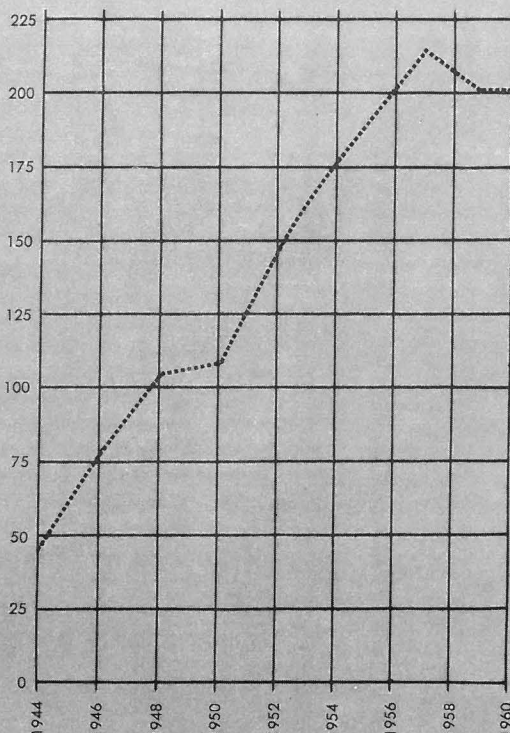
Persecutions and martyrdom as means to stem the spread of the Gospel are replaced by the more sinister weapons of atheistic materialism, secularism, spiritism, and racial hatred. Modern communications of press, radio and jets span the total world community. Missions today are facing the acid test of the ages. The message of "the power of God unto salvation" is supernaturally divine and cannot be neutralized nor destroyed. The assignment to "spread the Gospel to all nations" stands. God does not retreat.

On the threshold of its second century of existence, the Mennonite Brethren Church must re-examine its relation to the trust of "preaching the Gospel to every creature." Mission methods and molds are changing because the world and people change, but the message of God does not change. The printing press, the radio, the school, the institutions of advanced training to produce leadership become the major means of reaching the masses for Christ. At the operational center of the program is the national church in its own cultural pattern. The national as an individual desires equality, position and leadership.

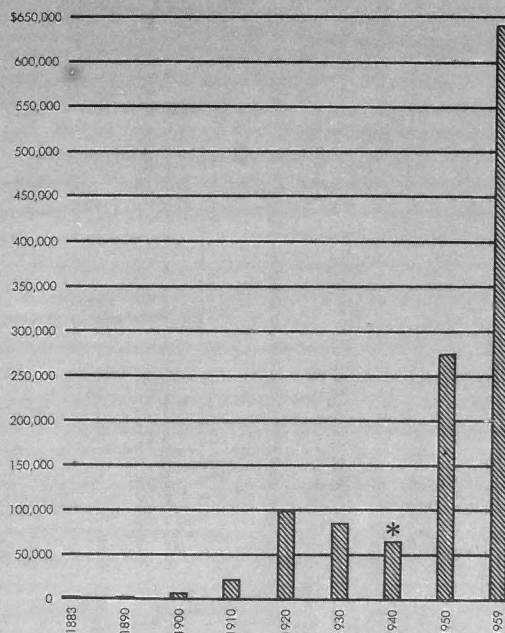
The missionary is challenged as a contender in the open conflict of intellectual and spiritual warfare. The message of truth is opposed by the most refined, deceptive and subtle counterfeits. Social improvements and promises of a coming world Utopia captivate the inward responses of the human spirits which are enslaved by Satan and which are in need of salvation.

Difficulties and human impossibilities, however, do not lessen the responsibilities for a trust which God has committed to His Church. The premise for the missionary program till Jesus comes is our obedience to His command. The assurance of victory rests in His sufficiency: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5: 4-5). The Mennonite Brethren Church, in order to fulfill its missionary calling, must respond to the demand for lives, prayer, and finances. More men, better men, the best men for the conflict of world evangelism; prayer, prevailing prayer on the basis of faith in the unchanging message of God and His promises to accomplish His purpose; stewardship, true stewardship, which recognizes God's purpose as the supreme responsibility and places personal wants and desires second—these are our responsibilities in meeting God's missionary assignment to the Mennonite Brethren Church.

GROWTH OF FOREIGN MISSIONS STAFF



GROWTH OF FOREIGN MISSIONS CONTRIBUTIONS



\* Plus additional contributions through African Missionary Society



Conference Offices — Board of Foreign  
Missions, Board of General Welfare  
and Public Relations, Board of Trustees.



# General Welfare (Relief and Service)

The ministry of general welfare (relief and service) has played a vital part in the development, struggles and testimony of the brotherhood. In times of suffering and emergency, the brotherhood has been served and its testimony for Christ preserved and extended. Through the years the brotherhood's witness for Christ has been extended as it ministered His love in a world of suffering and distress. This ministry has developed and expressed itself in the following ways:

## *Resettlement*

As Biblical pilgrims and strangers, Mennonites have gone from country to country for the sake of the Christian faith. Among the Mennonite migrations from the Old World to the New are three which have greatly affected the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Faced with military service, Mennonites began leaving Russia for the American Midwest in 1873. Around 200 Mennonite Brethren families may have come between 1874 and 1880. Their settlement constituted the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church in America. In the spirit of brotherhood and mutual aid, our brethren soon began aiding each other. At the 1884 Conference Brother Johann Regier, Henderson, Nebraska, was asked to supervise support of the poor members among the immigrants.

The second major movement from Russia affecting the Mennonite Brethren Church occurred in the 1920's. This immigration greatly increased the membership of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada. Through the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization these folks were assisted in their transportation and settlement in Canada. From their brethren in the U. S. also came a large amount of clothing and funds to pay *Reiseschuld* (transportation debt) and help needy families. Greatly used of the Lord in the relocation of our people were Brother B. B. Janz who secured exit permits from the Russian government and Brother C. F. Klassen who solicited funds to pay for the transportation.

The movement of our refugee brethren and sisters from Russia and western Europe in the early

1930's and latter 1940's led to the establishment of our Conference on the South American continent, and a substantial increase of our church membership in Canada. Their harrowing flight from Russia and their rugged pioneering in Paraguay were well-nigh unbearable.

In the fall of 1929 thousands of Mennonites flocked to Moscow in a desperate attempt to leave the country. Their plight was called to the attention of the Mennonite Central Committee and also became the concern of North American Mennonites. MCC was asked to assume responsibility for financing and directing the immigration to Paraguay of all Mennonite refugees who could not enter Canada.

With the end of World War II the plight of thousands of Russian and East Prussian Mennonites became known. This again became the concern of the MCC through which we were able to extend much spiritual and material aid to these people. Through MCC and the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, we helped thousands of refugees to new homes in the Western Hemisphere. This chapter includes the miraculous exodus of the 1,100 harrassed refugees from Berlin. Divinely guided through the Iron Curtain, they sailed for South America on the good ship *Volendam* on February 1, 1947. Migration assistance to Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay was followed by tremendous settlement assistance.

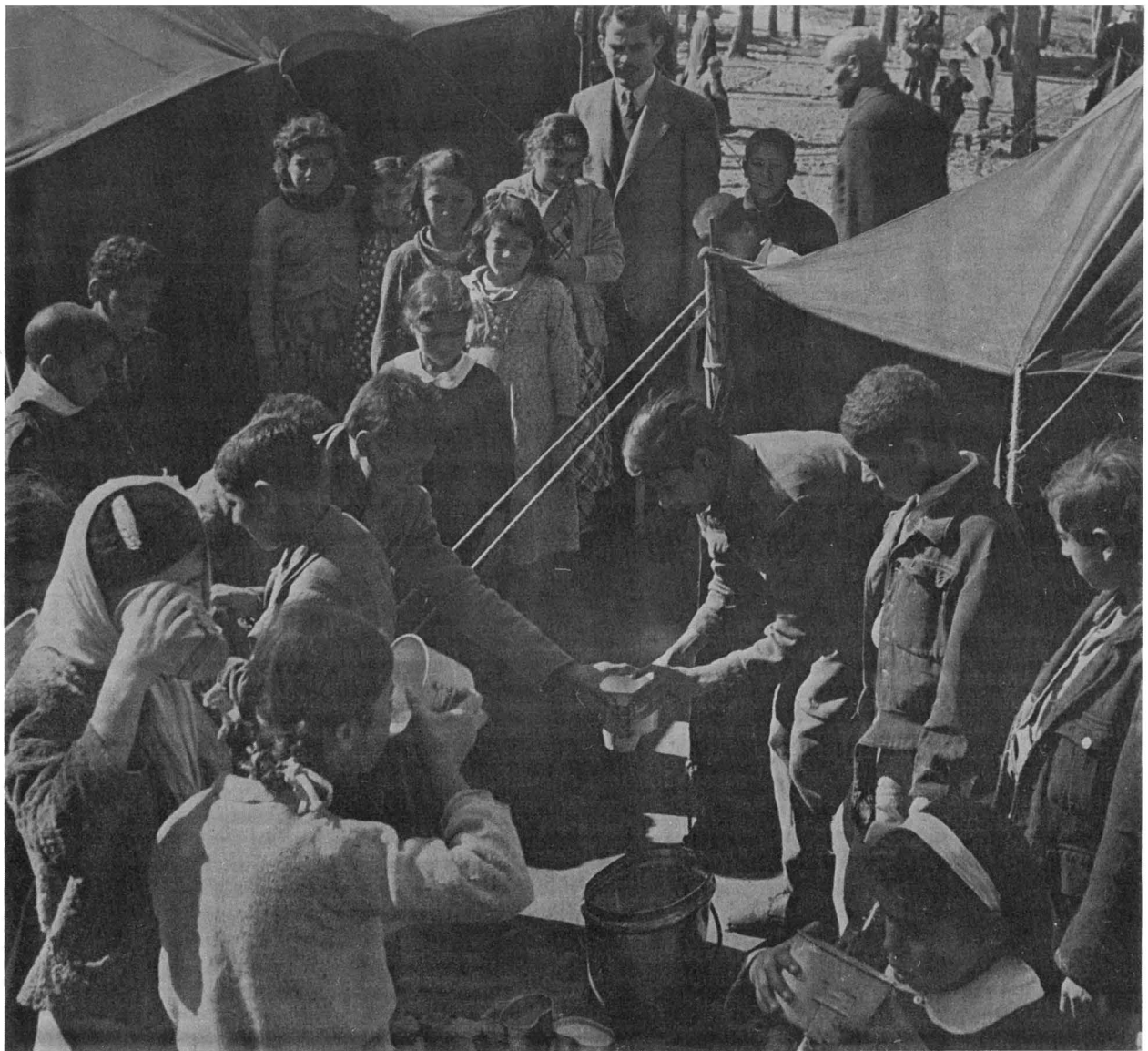
## *Relief*

In response to the command and example of Christ, the brotherhood has always sought to extend compassion and help to the needy—within and without the brotherhood at home as well as abroad.

In Russia and later in America our churches gathered funds for relief of the suffering on the mission field in India. Relief funds were also gathered in America for other famine-stricken people in India as well as other needy groups at home.

During and after World War I our people and other Mennonites contributed funds for the relief of war sufferers through various relief organizations, and a number of our men did relief service in Europe for several years.

The plight of our famine-stricken brethren in Russia after World War I moved the Conference



Feeding of the hungry is a practical demonstration of the Gospel.

deeply. Plans were made to send relief, and contributions poured in. The brethren M. B. Fast and William Neufeld went to Russia on their own to administer aid with contributions from individuals and the Conference. But it was found most practical to undertake a united relief effort to meet the tremendous need. So in 1920 our Conference relief interests joined other Mennonite relief groups and organized the Mennonite Central Committee to send food and clothing to our starving Mennonite people in Russia. Among the early representatives in this mission of mercy was our Brother P. C. Hiebert. More than \$1,160,000 were poured into this ministry between 1920 and 1925. Many are the members and workers of our brotherhood whose lives were preserved through this ministry.

Another relief undertaking in the Conference was the mailing of relief packages abroad begun by Brother J. F. Harms in 1924. In 1936 the Confer-

ence asked Brother M. A. Kroeker to continue this ministry which he did until 1955. During this time packages and gifts valued at more than \$100,000 were sent to needy persons in Russia, Germany, Paraguay and other countries.

When World War II came our people again responded in Christian compassion to the victims of war. Begun in Poland in 1939, relief work was extended to other countries of Europe and also to the Middle East and Far East. This relief effort included the Mennonites settled in Paraguay. The help and hope brought to people in these countries cannot be expressed in words. Significant in these relief efforts were the services of the relief workers who gave themselves to serve "in the name of Christ." A prominent feature of the relief program were gifts-in-kind. From 1946 to 1948 when this type of giving reached its peak, well over five million dollars worth of food, clothing, tools and

Christmas packages were contributed by North American Mennonites.

Today our churches continue to supply funds, material aid and some personnel for MCC relief although in lesser amounts than previously. Some aid is extended to needy people in Paraguay. Of special concern to our Conference in recent years have been relief needs on our mission fields for which churches have contributed generously.

#### *South America*

A primary welfare concern in our Conference have been members of our household of faith who fled as refugees to South America. Several years after settlement our members in the various colonies began organizing congregations. But our brethren and sisters had suffered heavily and been severely tested by Communism and war in Europe.

From North America came various types of assistance. In 1937 Brother P. C. Hiebert spent several months ministering and helping our brethren in South America. In 1948 Brother B. B. Janz labored for many months in the churches and colonies giving them spiritual help and guidance.

Other brethren were sent to South America for longer periods, to strengthen the churches, to do evangelistic work, to conduct Bible schools and to provide financial assistance. Bible Schools have helped to strengthen the churches considerably. They have taught young people the Word of God and trained workers for Christian service.

Church buildings have been erected with assistance from North America. Needy families have received relief. Ministers and teachers have been aided so they could give themselves to serve the churches and schools. Students have been helped in their preparation for Christian service.

In February, 1948, representatives of our churches in Paraguay and Brazil met and a South American Conference began. Later that year the Conference was received into our General Conference. Representing our South American churches at that occasion in North America were Brother Kornelius Voth of Paraguay and Brother Gerhard Rosenfeld of Brazil. In more recent years other brethren have represented the South American churches on visits to North America, and thus the two Conferences have been drawn closer together. In 1957 Brother Gerhard Balzer visited churches in North America and attended the General Conference and in 1960 Brother Gerhard Giesbrecht is representing the South American Conference at the centennial conference.

#### *Mennonite Central Committee*

Through the Mennonite Central Committee our brotherhood has served and been served in ministries which could not be effected alone. Together

with other Mennonites we have been able to reach out to help many needy peoples and to witness of our faith to the world. As a brotherhood we are also grateful for the contribution our Brother P. C. Hiebert made as a founder and chairman of MCC.

MCC began in 1920 when Mennonites of North America sent relief to their famine-stricken brethren in Russia. Its task was to coordinate and administer relief and services for the individual Mennonite churches and relief committees.

In 1929 MCC was called to help Russian Mennonites who were fleeing political persecution and migrating to Canada and South America.

In connection with World War II there were two tasks. The Committee assisted young men in Civilian Public Service as an alternate to military service and prepared to administer relief to thousands in war-devastated countries. A large amount of goods and cash have been contributed since World War II. Millions of persons around the world have been clothed and fed. Refugees have been resettled in North and South America. MCC has sought to witness "in the name of Christ" wherever national tension, disasters and wars cause hatred and suspicion or wherever a neighbor is in need.

Today MCC is recognized for its ability to provide help to people in need around the world. Its services are administered through four sections: Through Foreign Relief and Services, victims of war, flood and famine receive food and clothing, and Mennonites in South America are aided in problems of refugee resettlement. In Voluntary Service young people serve through deeds of love, sympathy, and understanding in places of need. The Peace Section serves the interests of conscientious objectors and represents them to the government. Mental Health Services coordinates the operation

A strong bond of fellowship spans the continents: the brethren Gerhard Balzer, Paraguay, and B. B. Janz, Canada.





of three 40-bed hospitals for the mentally ill and of a fourth institution being developed.

### *Alternative Service*

To be "in the world, but not of the world" has been the guiding principle of the brotherhood in its relationships with government and society. In time of conscription and war, we have sought to maintain a consistent testimony for Christ and to carry out our rightful responsibilities toward our fellowmen.

In Russia our churches contributed liberally for the maintenance and spiritual welfare of their men in alternative service. In the United States during World War I many of our men were refused non-combatant service and were often mistreated, but later they were granted the privilege of farm service as well as relief service abroad.

In response to church representation to Ottawa and Washington, Mennonites were granted the privilege of alternative service during World War II. As a result, our drafted men were able to serve the national interests of their countries in projects of a constructive nature. In Canada our churches usually had several ministers in the camps to serve the spiritual welfare of their men, while in the United States the total camp life of Civilian Public Service was the responsibility of the churches.

In mid-1952 the U. S. government began requiring peace-time service of conscientious objectors. Through this program our 1-W men have performed worthwhile and needed service in our society and helped our Conference extend its witness for Christ.

Suffering and privation were the lot of many as they fled the destruction of war.

In lieu of war bonds, our people have purchased civilian bonds. During national emergencies and catastrophes, our people have generously contributed money and material and have rendered personal service to aid the distressed.

A new form of service to our fellowmen which has developed marvelously in recent years is Mennonite Disaster Service. By helping victims of disaster and other losses, we have been able to give an effective Christian witness.

Through the years the Conference has upheld the peace and service testimony in various ways. Shortly after World War I a statement on nonresistance was adopted and a committee of several brethren elected to encourage its expression. On different occasions the brotherhood has declared its position on jury service, on prohibition, on war and military service, on Civil Defense. After World War II several voluntary service projects were operated by several district conferences and throughout the constituency young people were encouraged to give themselves in Christian service. Literature has been published, and Peace Sunday observed in November to emphasize our Christian witness in a world of conflict. A major effort was the publication of *True Nonresistance Through Christ* in 1955.

### *Mutual Aid and Hospitals*

Our churches have also sought to express Christian love and esteem through mutual aid societies and through hospitals and other institutional services. Frequently these services have been inter-Mennonite, but our churches have been strong supporters.

In Russia the Mennonites helped each other provide land for their growing population through a mutual aid organization. In North America our people have actively participated in mutual aid societies to share and help each other in losses incurred by disaster and illness.

In institutional services in Russia, our people established and operated hospitals, homes for the aged, an orphanage, a school for handicapped children, a hospital for the mentally ill, and a school to train nurses and deaconesses.

In North America the Conference encouraged hospital service. The services of deaconesses were also encouraged and supported. To provide Christian care for the aging and the ill has been a grow-ing concern in our churches. At present many of our churches operate or share in the support of homes for the aged and hospitals. The Canadian Conference operates the Bethesda mental hospital in Ontario.

A growing responsibility is the rapidly increasing number of older folks in our communities. We are challenged to help them prepare for their later years and to help them to make these years useful and worthwhile.



## Organization and Administration

In Russia our churches made relief contributions to India through their mission committee. Various welfare and mutual aid services were conducted through colony organization. Institutions such as hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages and nurses training schools were also operated on an inter-Mennonite basis. The Mennonites had developed a number of efficient welfare institutions which our M. B. churches also supported and administered.

In America, relief giving and work were also associated with the foreign missions program at first. Until 1920, relief funds were received and handled as a *Spezielle Kasse* (special treasury) by Brother J. W. Wiens, the foreign missions treasurer.

World War I and the Russian famine led to the organization of various relief efforts. Several inter-Mennonite relief efforts were organized in which our churches sought to do their part. Our own Conference, too, made plans to send bread to the starving brethren in Russia. All of these relief efforts were merged in the formation of the Mennonite Central Committee in 1920. Since that time a share of the relief and service ministry of our Conference has been carried out through MCC.

In 1920 the district conferences in the United States and Canada voted for representatives for relief and colonization. This resulted in a *Hilfskomitee* (Relief Committee) consisting of P. C. Hiebert, chairman; D. C. Eitzen, vice-chairman; J. W. Wiens, treasurer; P. H. Balzer, H. A. Neufeld, J. B. Dyck and H. H. Flaming, members.

Then in 1939 this committee and a committee on nonresistance were merged into a Committee for Nonresistance and Relief. This new committee was organized to include equal representatives from our Canadian Conference whose relief and service interests had grown through the years. In 1943 this committee was named the Committee for General Welfare and Public Relations.

In Canada meanwhile, the administration of immigration, relief and peace interests developed through inter-Mennonite organizations. In 1922 the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization was organized to help the famine-stricken Mennonites of Russia. In 1940 the Mennonites of western Canada formed the Mennonite Central Relief Committee to channel relief funds to alleviate human suffering in various parts of this world. Also organized in 1940 was the Conference of Historic Peace Churches of Ontario. During the war this body represented our draft-age men to the Canadian government and served them in various ways.

While participating in these organizations, our Canadian churches have developed their own Conference peace committee. *Dienst am Evangelium* (Service for Evangelism) was formed and serves as the Canadian section of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations. Together the Canadian and U. S. sections administer services to our



Brother P. C. Hiebert gave early leadership in MCC and Conference work.

South American Conference and other services affecting both conferences.

At present relief and service interests in the U. S. Conference are administered through the Board of office in Hillsboro. In Canada, the Conference is served by its *Dienst am Evangelium* and its Peace

### MENNONITE MIGRATIONS

#### 1874-1884

|                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| From Russia to Canada.....        | 8,000  |
| From Russia to United States..... | 10,000 |

#### 1923-1930

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| From Russia to Canada..... | 21,000 |
|----------------------------|--------|

#### 1930-1934

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| From Russia (via Germany and China) and from Poland to Paraguay..... | 2,001 |
| From Russia (via Germany and China) to Brazil.....                   | 1,200 |

#### 1947-1951

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| From Russia (via Germany and Holland) to Paraguay ..... | 4,849 |
| From Germany (some via Denmark) to Uruguay.....         | 1,181 |

#### 1946-1952

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| From Europe to Canada..... | 7,566 |
| Paraguay .....             | 4,849 |
| Uruguay .....              | 1,184 |
| U. S. A.....               | 1,049 |

14,648

Committee. Other relief, immigration and peace services of our Canadian churches are carried out in cooperation with other Mennonite groups through the several inter-Mennonite bodies.

### *The Challenge of the Future*

Our guiding light for the future is the Word of God which says: "I have set before thee an open door." Probably as never before has the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations stood before such strategic open doors of service. Many are the calls: "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Among the challenges we now face are the following:

1. Bible teachers, evangelists and leaders for South America. We dare not relinquish our responsibilities to stand by our newly-organized South American Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. It is true that more and more the brethren in the South will be able to develop their own needed leadership. A strong Mennonite Brethren Church in South America is a strategic and urgent need of the hour. So we want to stand by giving such help as is needed and requested by them. Also of concern to us are our brethren behind the Iron Curtain whom we can now best help by faithful intercession.

2. Many peoples of the world have fallen victim to disaster, tragedy and cataclysmic natural forces. They have lost homes, property, loved ones and even courage and faith. To these we seek to minister in love, compassion and testimony. Our relief channels remain sensitive and effective to rush relief and aid wherever needed. The cry for help, food, clothing, shelter and spiritual encouragement will not cease as long as war and disaster plague mankind.

3. While men arm and train for war and destruction, we teach and urge all our young men to take the way of the cross. It is our desire, prayer and program to place before all draftees the claims of Christ and full discipleship. The Conference now assumes almost full responsibility to guide, orientate and structure its own 1-W program. Alternative service (1-W) offers our youth unprecedented opportunities to make their service count for Christ and the Church. A most strategic development is the opportunity for 1-W men to serve on our mission fields. Our 1-W men have already gone to Colombia, and we hope they will be able to serve on other fields. The United States government has never given us greater freedom and more privileges to let these draft years count. It is only a question whether we as a church and young people will accept the challenge of dedicated service. The challenge of Christian service also confronts our young women and those not affected by the draft.

4. Modern life is charged with tensions. Tense situations exist between races and between labor and management, and nationals struggle for independence. Around the globe and probably next to our own door is need for a life and testimony of the love of Christ who alone can dispel hatred, bitterness and redeem men from sin. Wherever an effective Christ-centered testimony can be given we shall not stand idly by. May God open our eyes to our neighbor wherever he is as he cries for help and lives in darkness with no one to point the way.

"The night cometh when no man can work." This then is our time for more aggressive, compassionate service for Christ and His Kingdom. If we will be up and doing, many hearts will respond with gifts of love and prayer in support of this vast field of service.

Mennonite Disaster Service lends a helping hand in time of catastrophe.





# The Conference Endowment Fund

Our Conference Endowment Fund had its origin about 1898 when our first missionaries were to be sent out to India. The governments concerned demanded a guarantee of support for these missionaries and their followers in case of calamity or emergency. To meet this request our Conference decided to establish a reserve fund of approximately \$50,000 to be used for any emergency in the foreign fields. At the Conference in 1901 the report showed that the encouraging amount of \$30,641.25 had been reached. In that year certificates were issued to those who gave sizeable amounts. The present Board has on hand several certificates of that year in amounts of \$100 to \$1,000 bearing the Conference seal and signed by Chairman Elder Abraham Schellenberg, Secretary John F. Harms, and Treasurer Franz Ediger.

When the first goal of \$50,000 was reached, the question arose: "What shall we do now?" The decision was made to keep on adding to the fund, an action characteristic of the chairman and originator of this program, Elder Abraham Schellenberg. His oft-used remark, "*Kommt, Brueder, wollen vorwaerts gehen*" (Come, brethren, let us move forward), challenged the brethren. Such a spirit is characteristic of all God's children who are sincere in building His Kingdom.

## Functions

Ways and means of increasing the fund were sought and found. Cash donations were received in various amounts. A steward's record book from Henderson, Nebraska shows that amounts from \$5 to \$100 were given in 1901. At present the amounts of these cash gifts range from one dollar to \$2,000.

Pledges were given in verbal form at first. Later a more definite system was developed and this is still in use. Note forms have been printed to be paid within ten years. They carry an option that they may be paid out in full at any earlier date. The annual payments if carried out the full ten years amount to one-tenth of the original pledge plus five per cent interest on the unpaid balance each year until paid in full.

Gifts of various kinds have been and are gratefully received: farms, homes, stocks and bonds or even equities in various investments.

Annuity gifts are also welcome. Where the donor needs or desires a life income from annuity gifts or cash contributions, an annuity interest will gladly be given at a set rate according to age of the donor.

Memorial gifts are also gladly received. Such gifts can be given in memory of some loved one or in memory of some special occasion such as a silver or golden wedding. They can be given as a direct gift or also on the annuity basis.

Gifts of money or properties given to the Conference Endowment Fund bring a perpetual income to our Conference programs, even when the donors have passed from this life into eternity.

## Principles of Operation

On one of the early certificates, given upon receiving a \$100 note, the principle of operation is very clearly stated as follows: "The interest is to be used for the spreading of the Gospel among the heathen; the principal is not to be spent" but is to be invested over and over again for profit, which in turn accrues to the foreign mission treasury. At first the Board of Foreign Missions was the sole benefactor. In the early 1940's the Board of Education was permitted to amalgamate its endowment fund with this Mission Endowment Fund. Since then the donor is free to designate whether the profit from his donation shall go for foreign missions or for the educational program of our Conference. It may also be designated partly for one purpose and the rest for the other.

The first branch of our service to the Lord through our Conference Endowment Fund is the \$50,000 guarantee fund for the safety of our missionaries in the foreign fields which is still honored today. Approximately that amount is continuously invested in United States and Canadian savings bonds which are negotiable at any time. The second branch is the net profit of this fund which flows each year into the foreign missions and the unified educational treasuries. A third branch is a Conference regulation whereby the Board of Foreign

Missions is allowed to withdraw up to \$10,000 per year from the Endowment Fund at such times when offerings are slow in coming in and expenses must be met. This amount, however, is deducted at the end of the year before the net profit is distributed, thus it is there again for the same purpose the next year. An amount as large as this has never been needed, but smaller amounts have been advanced and have been a great help and blessing in times of need. The fourth branch of this work is our revolving fund for the purpose of loaning funds to our church groups, for the building of churches, schools, homes for the aged, hospitals, etc., here at home and abroad.

The Board of Trustees, composed of nine members, administers the Conference Endowment Fund and other funds relating to the administration and operations of our General Conference organization. This Board is also responsible for the legal acquisition and disposition of Conference property.

An early fund note — The Conference Endowment Fund undergirds our foreign missions and higher education programs.

## Present Challenge

As we look back and try to "remember his marvelous works that he hath done," we are thankful for the growth of this aspect of the work of our brotherhood. It began as a small mustard seed. It has become a large tree. The 1901 records show the total assets to have been \$30,641.25. As of July, 1960, the total assets amounted to \$888,040.41. Over one-half million dollars is presently loaned out to our various church groups. Of this over \$200,000 has gone to Canadian groups and over \$300,000 to United States groups. From these and other investments a net profit of over \$28,000 was received and distributed at the end of 1959.

Fully realizing that we are blessed of God to be a blessing to others, and seeing the need of further promoting the Kingdom of God, we challenge ourselves anew to still greater and continued efforts of prayer and thankful giving in support of this great and noble program of our Conference.

# MISSIONS FOND CERTIFICAT

— DER —

## Amer. Mennoniten-Brüder-Gemeinde-Missions-Vereinigung.

Mache dich auf, werde Licht; denn dein Licht kommt, und die Herrlichkeit des Herrn gehet auf über dir.

Denn siehe, Finsternis bedeckt das Erdreich, und Dunkel die Völker; aber über dir gehet auf der Herr, und seine Herrlichkeit scheint über dir.

Und die Heiden werden in deinem Lichte wandeln, und die Könige im Glanz, der über dir aufgehet.

Isa. 60, 1—3.



Sagt ihr nicht selbst: Es sind noch vier Monate, so kommt die Ernte? Siehe, ich sage euch: Hebet eure Augen auf und sehet in das Feld, denn es ist schon weiß zur Ernte.

Und wer da schněidet, der empfānget Lohn, und sammelt Frucht zum ewigen Leben, auf das sich miteinander freuen, der da sät und der da erntet.

Joh. 4, 35. 36.



Hiermit wird bescheinigt, daß John L. Ann. Keelner Doß. in Polen (bier oder Note) beigetragen, und hat diesem gemäß einen Anteil an der Amer. Menn. Br. Gem. Missions-Vereinigung, die den Zweck hat, den Heiden das Evangelium von Christo zu bringen und sie durch dasselbe von dem Götzendienste und der Knechtschaft der Sünde zu befreien und dem Gehorsam des Glaubens aufzurichten.

Aug 23. 19. 01. Abraham Schellburg Doß. in Polen  
Frank Ediger Doß. in Polen  
John Barcus Doß. in Polen

Publer, Kans., Aug 23. 19. 01. Zion's Hope Print, Medford, Okla.

## Tabor College

The early history of Tabor College is essentially the history of Christian higher education in the Mennonite Brethren Church. The founding of Tabor in 1908 was the culmination, a drawing together of educational interests into a single purpose. This purpose, clearly stated in the first catalog, was "to meet the educational needs of the Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America. . . . The curriculum includes primarily those courses of study . . . leading to proficiency in the use of the German and English languages, a knowledge of mathematic and scientific fields, and a rich treasure of Biblical knowledge for workers in Sunday schools, in the churches, and on the home and foreign mission fields. The school association, the board, and the faculty in particular trust that this institution may be a seedbed of true Christianity, where the spirit of prayer prevails and where the spiritual life of students may be deepened and enriched."

The development of Christian higher education in the Mennonite Brethren Conference was accompanied by many obstacles and a few setbacks. When Mennonite settlers had arrived in the Midwest in the fall of 1874 their immediate attention was given to the problems of carving an existence out of the native prairies. Not until the General Conference of 1883 was the subject of education mentioned in any serious way.

The first concrete action came in 1884 with the formation of the Kansas School Association. This association for two years supported a small Bible school under the direction of Rev. John F. Harms at the village of Canada, Kansas, the school later being moved to Lehigh.

The next venture was a *Vereinsschule* opened near Buhler, Kansas, under the direction of Brother John F. Duerksen. Like its predecessor, this school was short-lived. These early schools, conducted solely in the German language, were of necessity limited in scope, usually built around single individuals, who were generally underpaid.

Another chapter in early educational efforts began in 1898 when Duerksen assumed the chairmanship of the German Department at McPherson Col-

lege. Under an arrangement with that school, Duerksen served as spiritual counselor for young Mennonite Brethren students and the Conference supported and supervised the department. The arrangement lasted until 1904, with many Conference young people thus getting their initial higher education. Other schools were also established, such as Corn Bible School, Corn, Oklahoma; the Preparatory School, Mountain Lake, Minnesota; and Zoar Academy, Inman, Kansas; but none of these offered the college education for which our young people had begun to ask.

The stage was thus set for the founding of Tabor College in 1908 as a Christian liberal arts college, offering courses in six divisions, the Preparatory Course, the German-English Academic Course, the English Academic Course, the Bible Course, the College Course, and the Business Course.

Two men in particular were influential in the March, 1908, organization of the Tabor College Corporation which sponsored the new college. They were Rev. John K. Hiebert, who served as chairman of the first board, and Rev. Henry W. Lohrenz, who became the College's first president. These men, together with their contemporaries, set the tone which through the 52-year history of the college has characterized the endeavors of its administrators and faculty—to provide an education based solidly on the Bible as God's inspired Word, an education recognizing the authority and lordship of Jesus Christ as the Teacher and Savior of man.

The period from 1908 to 1918 was one of gradual expansion. The first year ended with an enrollment of 102 and six instructors, President Lohrenz, P. C. Hiebert, P. P. Rempel, Z. C. Bartel, Katharina Friesen, and Tina Schultz. Other influential faculty members of these first years included D. E. Harder, B. E. Ebel, H. F. Toews, and A. A. Groening. By 1918 the faculty had expanded to fifteen and the student body to 200.

There were physical advances too. The administration building was completed the first year and by 1918 contained, in addition to classrooms and chapel, a well-equipped commercial department, two laboratories, the museum, and a library of over 3,000 volumes. The curriculum had been expanded



to include the departments of the College, Theology, Academy, Commerce, Music, Expression, and Art.

April 30, 1918, is a significant date in the history of Tabor College. It represents the day on which the original administration building burned. But more important, it marks the rebirth of an enthusiasm for the cause of Christian higher education among alumni and the Mennonite Brethren constituency which has carried the College through a half century.

The ashes were still glowing when the student body, faculty, alumni, local merchants, and interested friends gathered to launch a drive to rebuild the College. By noon the next day they had subscribed 10,000 dollars. One year later construction was begun on the present administration building at a cost of \$120,000, as well as on a women's dormitory which presently serves as a music hall and cafeteria. Two years after the fire, with classes having been housed in temporary quarters throughout the city, Tabor was once more in its own home.

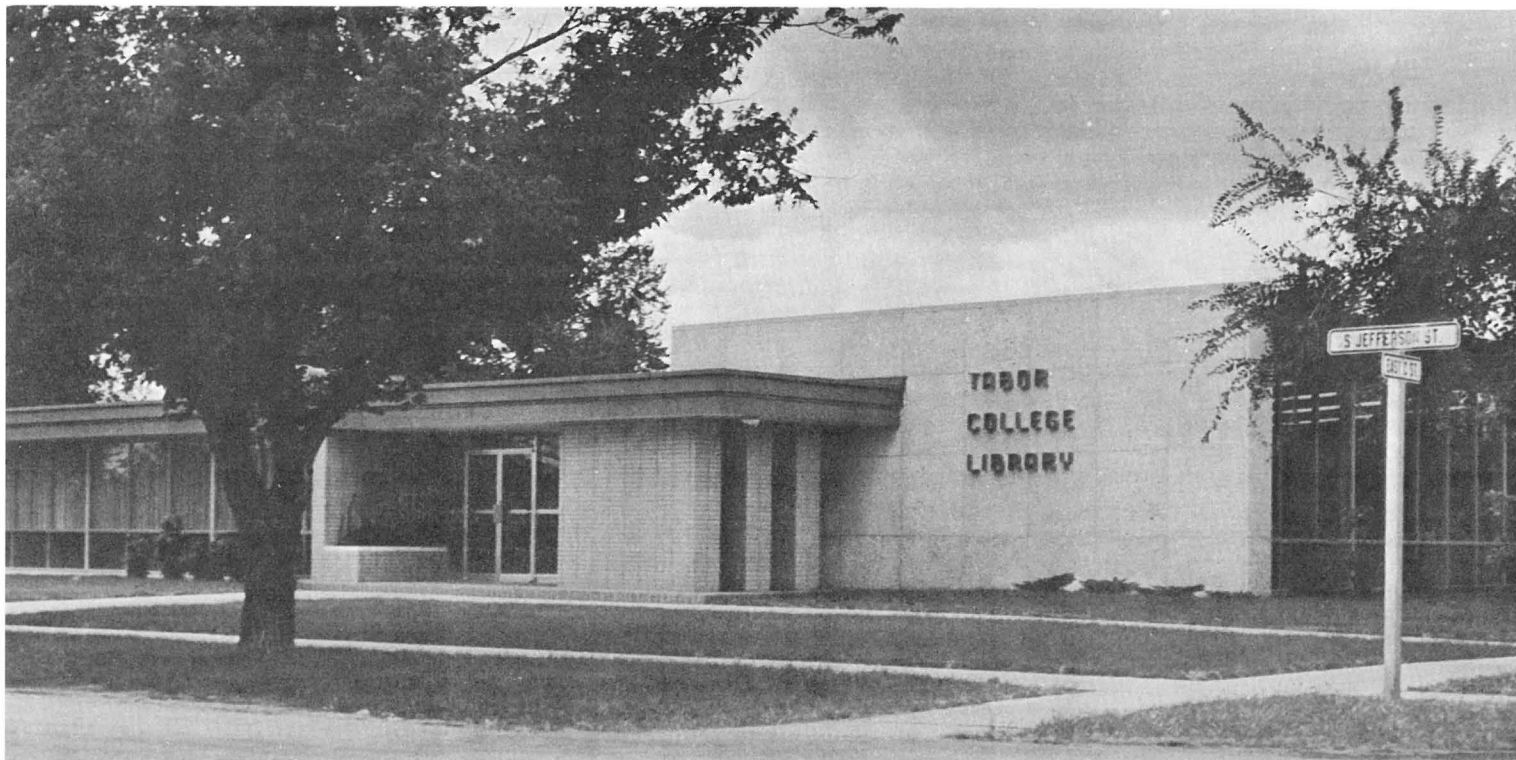
The years between the two World Wars, while representing progress both in the quality of education and in physical improvements, were nevertheless years of struggle for the College. Organized as a corporation, the school had no way of drawing direct support from the constituent churches, and had to rely on the loyalty of its alumni and friends

for finances. Already as early as the fall of 1930 the effects of the economic depression began to aggravate the shaky financial structure.

Between 1927 and 1930 the College had been working strenuously toward accreditation and had achieved state recognition for its senior college program with certain qualifications, as well as full recognition of the first two years. The General Conference of 1930 agreed to subsidize Tabor's program with an annual grant of \$10,000. On the basis of this enthusiastic resolution, the Corporation had engaged a qualified staff and strengthened the senior college program under the presidency of Dr. P. C. Hiebert. However, fulfillment of the promise never came about. The General Conference Yearbook of 1933 reveals that from July 1, 1930, to October 1, 1933, the Conference contributed \$5,962.67 instead of the \$30,000 which had been promised. The result was that the College first lost its senior college recognition, and eventually even its junior college accreditation.

It was now apparent that the College could no longer be run on a corporation basis, and in 1933 the corporation offered the school to the Conference, an offer accepted the following year by more than two-thirds of the membership. After temporarily closing its doors in 1934-35 for reorganization, the College began operations as a Conference school under its present system.

Trained Christian workers will strengthen  
the work and witness of the church.



The first years following reorganization were years of retrenchment—of regaining financial solvency and the confidence of students, most of whom had left with the loss of accreditation. Under its new president, Rev. A. E. Janzen, the Thousand Friends Plan was inaugurated. The goal was to encourage one thousand friends of Tabor to give ten dollars annually toward the school's operation. Combined with church offerings, this provided a fairly stable financial base and, together with a qualified staff, resulted in a two-year accredited status during the first year as a Conference school.

In 1942 the program was expanded to include a four-year curriculum, with Dr. P. E. Schellenberg being named president that year. The return of servicemen to the campus after World War II swelled enrollments to their highest point in the school's history, with 422 in 1946 (including academy and special students). A step forward was the termination of the Academy Department in 1949, leaving all campus facilities for college instruction.

The years following World War II were characterized by moderate but steady growth in physical facilities plus continuous improvements in curriculum and in quality of instruction. The rising enrollments brought a great demand for housing facilities. Most of the residence halls presently in use were acquired during this time.

The year 1947 was significant in that it marked the beginning of secondary teacher education at Tabor. One of Tabor's main contributions through the years has been the many dedicated Christian young teachers who each year leave the campus for all parts of the world. At present, approximately forty per cent of all graduates enter the teaching field. Three presidents have served the College since 1952—Rev. John N. C. Hiebert (1952-54), Rev. Frank C. Peters (1954-56), and Dr. Leonard J. Franz (1956-present).

The 1954 General Conference accepted Pacific College as a Conference school and established the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. The years since then have been especially significant for Tabor College. The year 1955 saw the implementation of the Conference-wide "budgeted-giving" plan of support whereby Conference higher education was materially strengthened. The first-fruits of the new budget system saw the completion of Tabor's new library building in 1957.

The 1954 Conference had also instructed the College to work toward full four-year accreditation "with all deliberate speed." Under the administration of Dr. Franz, an intensive program of curriculum revision, instructional improvement, physical plant development, and institutional self-study was implemented.

Extensive contacts were made with state and provincial education offices in all major constituent areas, with a resulting clarification and marked improvement of credit transfer. In rapid succession



H. W. Lohrenz (1878-1945), First president of Tabor College and leader in Conference activities.

came improvements in the laboratories of the chemistry, biology, physics, and home economics departments; added equipment and materials for many other departments; increased library volumes; an addition to the dining hall; improvements in the physical education athletic fields.

The number of instructors holding doctorates has doubled in the past few years, and many other instructors have continued work toward advanced degrees. Careful revision of curricular offerings saw the addition of a General Education program as a prerequisite for graduation. A number of pre-professional programs were introduced. And finally, a thorough institutional self-survey was undertaken.

The result was full accreditation of Tabor College by the Kansas State Department of Public Instruction and by the University of Kansas in May of 1959. This accreditation has resulted in immeasurable benefits to the College. The immediate effect was that students were able to complete all requirements for teacher certification at the College. It also strengthened the already good reputation of Tabor credits in transfer to graduate and professional schools throughout the U. S. and Canada. Accreditation has also brought increased interest and confidence on the part of potential students, parents, and the Conference constituency.

Looking back at the fifty-two years of Tabor's history—its trials but also its triumphs and immeasurable contributions to the Conference and the cause of Christianity—we are led to give humble thanks to our heavenly Father for guidance. The sacrificial efforts of hundreds of dedicated staff

members, board members, and the many friends who prayed and gave for Tabor's growth would have been in vain except for God's providence.

What, we may ask, does Tabor College represent in the present and future life of the Mennonite Brethren Church? As the senior college of our constituency, working closely with the churches, it represents a bulwark of Christian idealism for the youth of our Conference. We see a student body of 300 students, a full-time faculty of twenty-five plus four part-time and ten staff members, a campus of sixteen instructional and residential buildings; this is the physical make-up of the College.

The curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree is built around a core of fifteen semester hours of required Bible courses giving each graduate a familiarity with the Old and New Testaments, a knowledge of our Christian heritage, and a foundation of basic Christian doctrine and beliefs. In addition, Tabor covets for all students the experience of regeneration and personal commitment to Christ for guidance in their lives and in choice of vocation. The College fosters such enriching activities as the morning chapel service, the Christian Life Emphasis Week, the Bible Conference Week, missionary conferences, the student Christian Fellowship Association, student and faculty prayer meetings, and seeks to relate the principles of Christ to its instruction in all nineteen departments.

In assessing the value of Tabor College to the Mennonite Brethren Church, one needs but to look at the church's pastors, its home and foreign missionaries, its Sunday school workers and music directors, the scores of teachers in Christian Bible schools, academies, colleges, and the seminary, and hundreds of Christian men and women in various professions who make up the congregations and support the Conference work by prayers and gifts. A major percentage of these workers come from the ranks of more than 5,000 Tabor graduates and former students.

The task entrusted to Tabor by the Conference has but started. The future of the Mennonite Brethren Church in helping to fulfill Christ's Great Commission will require much loyal devotion and sacrifice for the cause of Christian higher education. There are urgent needs which must be met so that the army of young people at our door shall not be turned away. New dormitories for both men and women are a distinct necessity; additional dining facilities will be needed soon, as are gifts for completion of the auditorium-gymnasium-student center now under construction. But above these physical needs, Tabor will in the coming years require large numbers of dedicated young people for future leadership and faculty positions; parents who will send their children to school; and a host of friends who are determined that Christian higher education in the Mennonite Brethren Conference shall continue its growth in service to God and to man.

## M. B. Biblical Seminary

In the year 1948 the first official recommendation to establish a theological seminary of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America was brought to the General Conference at the business sessions held in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The recommendation, at first, indicated that the Conference "consider the desirability of giving the Bible School of Tabor College the recognition of the status of the seminary. It was moved, however, that the Conference "go on record that, in principle, we need our own seminary." A seminary commission was then elected, representative of the different areas and districts of the General Conference, to study the feasibility of establishing a seminary and to report their findings to the General Conference at their next session.

Three years later, in 1951, at the General Conference held at Winkler, Manitoba, the seminary commission submitted the report of their findings. It was pointed out that "a very evident need exists for a Mennonite Brethren Seminary" in order that we might "'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving for the faith of the Gospel'." Prevailing circumstances at the time, it was suggested, seemed to indicate that it would be most advantageous to establish a seminary "within or close to an already existing Mennonite Brethren School of higher learning." The report received, the Conference delegated a co-ordination committee to "make further investigation of the seminary question" and submit their findings to the Committee of Reference and Counsel, who, in turn, were to refer the results of their study to the district conferences for action.

At the General Conference held in Hillsboro, Kansas, in 1954, the program of education, particularly as it affected the United States churches, underwent a marked change of development. Pacific Bible Institute of Fresno was offered to the General Conference. Upon the action of the Conference, the schools in the United States, Pacific Bible Institute and Tabor College, came under the program of unification, whereby one Board of Education operates the schools of the Conference from one treasury. In view of certain issues that required further study and clarity, particularly respecting the details of implementing the unified program of education, the Conference requested the newly elected Board of Education "to direct our educational program under the leading of the Lord," with the provision that they "come to the churches for help or advice." Accordingly, the Board of Education, with its first chairman under the new program, Brother E. J. Peters, after much prayer and seeking the will of the Lord, courageously envisioned a program of education whereby the department of theology of Tabor College would be "linked to Pacific Bible Institute through a joint president on an adjoining campus, (yet) at the same time operate as a separate school."

On September 8, 1955, the Seminary opened its





As new congregations are formed the demand for trained, spiritual leaders increases.

doors for instruction in the administration building of Pacific Bible Institute, at 2149 Tuolumne Street, with Rev. B. J. Braun accepting the call to the first presidency of the two schools on the West Coast. Five professors and fifteen full-time and three part-time students constituted the Seminary of the first year. With the prospects of an increased enrollment, the need for more adequate facilities and for more separateness of the Seminary from Pacific Bible Institute, the Board of Education purchased a six-acre campus, at the corner of Chestnut and Butler Streets, adjoining the new campus of Pacific Bible Institute. The Seminary campus is comparable to a city park, with towering palms and cedars and verdant landscaping. The Seminary building is a spacious mansion, comprised of four classrooms, a chapel, a reading room, a central hall, a kitchen, several offices, and a full basement, and is adequate to accommodate a student enrollment of seventy-five. The library, used jointly with Pacific Bible Institute, contains about 13,000 volumes, most of which are in the field of Bible, Theology, Missions, Christian Education, and Bible-related studies, and is equal to the requirements for effective study.

The Seminary is now in its sixth year of operation. During this short period of its history twenty-two students have been graduated with a

seminary degree. Of those who have graduated or attended the Seminary, the records show that twenty-four are pastors, twenty-two are missionaries, five are engaged in educational work in church-related schools, and others are serving the Lord in various capacities in their local congregations.

The Seminary is designed to meet the rising demand for trained pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and Bible teachers. It is to provide for the Church an adequate supply of able and faithful ministers of the Gospel, workmen that are qualified "rightly to divide the Word of Truth." From the very nature of its objectives, its student enrollment is limited to candidates who meet the academic requirement for admission, which is the Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent, who manifest a promise of usefulness in the Gospel ministry, and who "hold to the major tenets of evangelical Christianity and (are) in agreement with the doctrinal position of the Seminary on these tenets."

It is the fervent prayer of the Seminary, the Board of Education, the supporting churches of the Conference, and its many friends, that this center of theological training will be used of the Lord in the preparation of men and women for an effective ministry and service of the Gospel. To that end the Seminary is dedicated.

## Pacific Bible Institute

As early as 1940, the Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, at its annual sessions held in Dallas, Oregon, appointed a committee, which, among other things, was assigned to study the possibility of establishing a district conference Bible school. A year later, when the committee reported of unprecedented opportunities for the founding of a Bible school and of the warm response to the suggested plan, a permanent committee was elected to pursue the task of implementing plans toward the realization of the Bible Institute.

In 1942 the proposal to establish a Bible Institute in the city of Fresno, California, was introduced by the Committee of Religious Education at the Conference sessions held in Shafter and was accepted, with the provision of "not being too hasty in carrying out these recommendations." This caution was due to the heavy financial obligations of the churches to the Alternative Service projects during the war years. At the 1943 Conference in Lodi, the Religious Education Committee reported that an amount of five thousand dollars was already available for the beginning of a Bible Institute. At this session the Conference also accepted the official name of the proposed Bible School as "The Pacific Bible Institute," and instructed the Committee to prepare detailed plans by January 1, 1944, to be submitted to the churches for final disposition. With the ratification of these plans and the leading of the Lord evidenced in the purchasing of a building suited to the immediate needs of the school and in the securing of the first faculty, Pacific Bible Institute became a reality, opening its doors on September 18, 1944, with Rev. Sam Goossen heading the school in its initial years.

It is of interest to note the spiritual concern and watchfulness of the Conference in safeguarding the school against liberal trends by making Pacific Bible Institute "responsible to the Conference for teaching and conduct." The academic perspectives, too, were not overlooked, for the Conference stipulated that instruction in PBI should be offered on "college level."

In 1945, the Board of Education reported of the growth of the school and of the need for more adequate facilities. Accordingly, the Y. W. C. A. building was purchased at a reasonable price. A memorial from the P. K. Warkentin family in the amount of \$30,000 was made available toward the liquidation of the indebtedness of the purchase. In the same year Pacific Bible Institute was also officially incorporated.

The first president of the Institute was Dr. G. W. Peters, who accepted the call to this post in 1947. With an increase of student enrollment and a proportionately stronger faculty, the curricular offerings of the school were expanded to the status of a Bible College, being accredited by the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges and Bible Institutes.

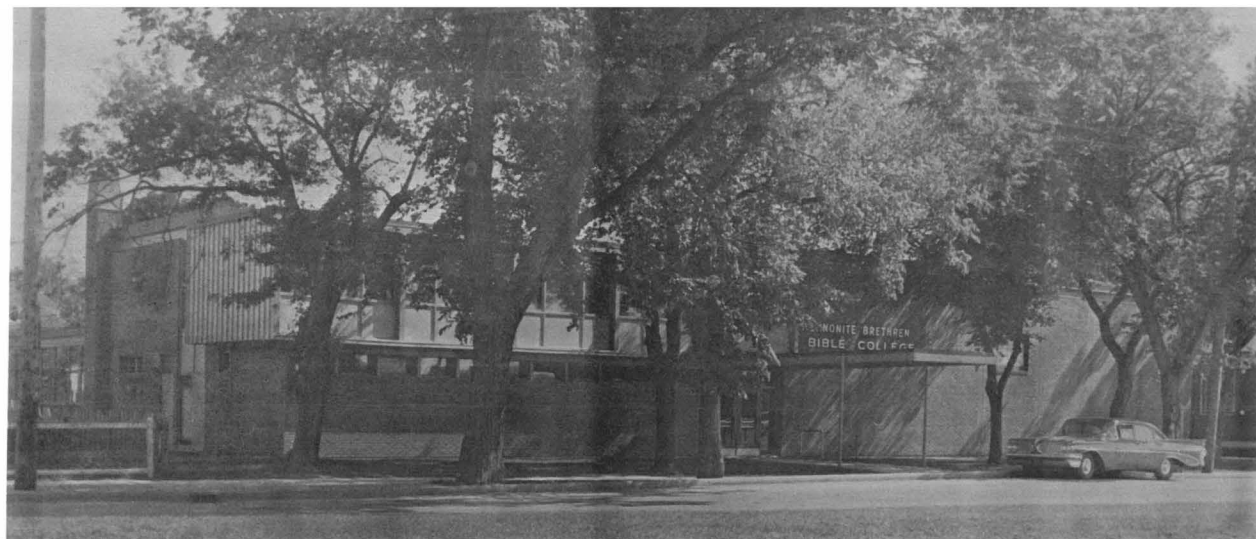
Bible College degrees were granted in Bible, Missions, Christian Education, Sacred Music, and Theology.

Beginning with a very modest enrollment of twenty-seven students in its first year, Pacific Bible Institute developed steadily. From its very inception, missions and evangelism were stressed, the effects of which are manifest in the large number of its graduates engaged as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, Bible teachers, and workers in the local congregations.

A marked change in its development occurred in 1954, when the Pacific District Conference offered its school to the General Conference. A "unified educational program" being instituted, Pacific Bible Institute came under the operation of the enlarged Board of Education. In connection with the new program of education envisioned by the Board, the Board of Trustees of the Pacific District Conference launched in 1955 a momentous project of purchasing fifty-three acres of choice land in the southeastern area of the city of Fresno, with a view to subdividing thirty acres for home sites, three acres for a future Mennonite Brethren Church, and twenty acres for the new campus of Pacific Bible Institute. The proceeds from the resale of the thirty acres of subdivision paid for the entire project, enabling the Board of Education, in behalf of the Conference, to receive the munificent gift of twenty acres for the new campus of Pacific Bible Institute. On May 24, 1959, in conjunction with the baccalaureate services, the first classroom wing of the new school was dedicated; and with the fall term of 1959, this spacious building of eight classrooms and several offices was occupied for class instruction. Future plans for the campus include a library building, a gymnasium, a chapel, an administration building, and such other structures as will be needed with the increased growth of the school. Presently, the dormitories and dining hall are under construction.

Since the inception of the unified program of education in the U. S. A., Rev. B. J. Braun served as president of the two schools located on the West Coast, Pacific Bible Institute and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Beginning with the fall term of 1960, the two schools will be more distinctly separated in their operation. Pacific Bible Institute of Fresno, now called Pacific College, will be headed by a Director directly responsible to the Board of Education. Of further import to the development of Pacific College is the emphasis that will be made in its twofold program: the Junior College division, and the Bible Institute division. Broader recognition of the liberal arts courses are in prospect, and it is of spiritual significance that young people will be enabled to pursue their academic studies in the context of a Christian College.

And what are the prospects for the future? That is in the hands of the Lord; but if God wills, we may expect an increase of student enrollment, a



Bible training is a prerequisite for Christian service.

broader base and recognition of academic accreditation, a stronger faculty, and more adequate facilities to meet the needs and demands of a growing school. Most significant, however, is the contribution we may expect Pacific College to make, under God, in the lives of its students, who will bring to their churches and to society at large returns in talent and knowledge, united with spiritual vision and fervor for Christ and His cause.

## M. B. Bible College

The Mennonite Brethren Bible College was founded by brethren of vision to meet a need in the Canadian brotherhood for higher theological training. The Bible schools and Christian high schools had served the church well in providing for a basic Christian training of church members for walk and witness. However, it was generally felt that the increasing demands upon the Christian worker at home and abroad made advanced theological training necessary. It was, of course, possible to direct such aspirants to the existing institutions of other denominations or to the many non-denominational schools. It was noted, though, that many of these graduates of other schools returned to our brotherhood unable to promote or defend the convictions which characterized the brotherhood. This situation gave the impetus to the Conference to found the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The program of any institution is moulded by the objectives. This would mean that an institution is evaluated in the light of its objectives. To the extent to which the school has fulfilled its objectives, has it justified its existence and has been successful. The objective of the Bible College as formulated by the Canadian brotherhood reads: "The Mennonite Brethren Bible College seeks to provide an opportunity for earnest men and women to prepare adequately for the high calling of Chris-

tian service as ministers, teachers, missionaries, choir leaders, and workers in other fields of Christian work." This objective, though broad, has remained unchanged in the sixteen years of the history of the College. It is the conviction of the College that the objective should be broad so that students with various vocational aims and goals can still profit from the experience of studying at the College and so create a true brotherhood spirit for those who will be chosen for specific work in the church. It is not enough just to teach brotherhood; it must be taught in a brotherhood setting. This Scriptural concept is central in our philosophy of theological training and is the determining factor in the nature of our College program. The College is aware of the fact that with such an emphasis it is running contrary to the generally accepted pattern of higher theological training in most Protestant denominations in America. However, the unique history of our brotherhood with its mission in the world is partly explained by this brotherhood emphasis in preparing and calling of workers for Christian service.

Several emphases have characterized the program of the College. In common with other evangelical schools, the Bible is given priority in the curriculum of the College. If a student chooses his program wisely, he could take exegetical courses covering every book of the Bible. The exegetical approach to the Bible is supplemented by courses in theology. Students soon recognize the emphasis on discipleship. Truth must be lived. A brotherhood ethic is proposed in which the group comes to a consensus under the influence of Scripture and prayer and so strives to give a united witness in matters concerning the Christian's walk.

In retrospect the College is humbled to see "what God hath wrought" through its ministry. Approximately twenty per cent of its graduates as well as a number of undergraduates are in the foreign mission field. What formerly was said of the British Empire is true here: The sun never sets on the graduates of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. An



equal number have been called to serve in pastors and in home mission projects. Others are teaching in our Bible schools and academies. To this must be added the positive influence which the music department has had on the choirs and singing of our churches.

The College is also fulfilling the last part of the objective, that is, "and workers in other fields of Christian work." In recent years, approximately one third of our total student body has been composed of teachers and nurses. Other professions are also represented. These professional people come to the College in order to make their vocation truly Christian and a more effective means of witness to their fellowmen.

The College has had a unifying effect on our Canadian brotherhood. Geographical isolation, social and cultural pressures and influences from other religious bodies have had, and still have, a disintegrating effect on our Conference. It is gratifying to note that through the ministry of the instructors a deeper loyalty to our principles has been brought about in the lives of the students and in the brotherhood in general. The special short-term course to which ministers come each winter has been another integrating feature in the program of the College.

Although the College is a theological institution, it also offers a limited number of liberal arts courses on a second year level. Most of the students come with the first year of arts completed. A wider recognition of these courses has been sought in the last years. Plans are also under way to strengthen and expand the theological curriculum.

The College is eager to continue its role in the brotherhood. The Lord has seen fit to bless this

Brother A. H. Unruh has provided continuing leadership in Bible training.



venture of faith in the past and the task which lies ahead promises many rewarding experiences for teacher and student. Ours are distressing days. These days require the Gospel of the saving grace of God preached by men who are steeped in the Word of God, guided by sound Biblical principles, and able to communicate to their contemporaries. These virtues do not just happen in the life of the messenger. Many have been able to catch the vision while studying at the College. Our doors shall continue to be open for others with like ambitions. To this end let us pray and labor.

## Corn Bible Academy

In the pioneer days of the Corn community the need for Bible training and better education was keenly felt. In 1902 a number of friends of education presented the question of a denominational school to the Mennonite Brethren Church at Corn.

After considering and praying about this question, the Church decided to establish and support such a school and promptly went to work erecting a school building and hiring teachers for the coming winter.

Rev. Isaac Harms was pastor of the church at the time the school was established and did very much to help organize and establish it. Since 1948 the Bessie Mennonite Brethren Church has joined in full support and operation of the institution.

The work has experienced a steady growth and expansion. In 1920 a fireproof two-room structure was erected, then other buildings were brought in to accommodate the growing student body. Today the central plant is a modern structure housing six classrooms (including science and home economics laboratories), a library and reading room, a projection room, a large auditorium, a bookstore, offices, a basement, industrial arts department, and other necessary facilities. A girls' dormitory, dining hall, and boy's dormitory have been added to the facilities.

The work from the beginning has been a venture of faith, and the blessings of the Lord and the loyal support of the constituency have made its growth possible. The school now offers a fully accredited, four-year high school course, functioning under the direction of six full-time instructors. Bible instruction and a positive Christian spirit form the foundational basis of the entire school and its work.

## Immanuel Academy

Immanuel Academy had its beginning in 1912 when the Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church felt the need of conducting daily Bible school classes for high school age young people. These were at first conducted at home, but were discontinued during the first World War.

In 1925 the Reedley Church erected a small school building, placing above it the name of "Reedley Bible School." David V. Wiebe as first director of the school played an important role in its early development. The school continued in operation from October 17, 1927 until May, 1932 when once more it was closed. In October, 1938 the Bible school opened its doors again and they have not closed since. Professor J. P. Rogalsky, who passed away in the summer of 1960, taught here for many years and also served as principal with unceasing dedication during struggling times.

In 1943 the school changed its name to Immanuel Bible School and also began its four-year high school academy program with Rev. J. N. C. Hiebert as principal.

In 1946 another milestone occurred with the moving of the school to its present picturesque campus overlooking the Kings River on the southwest corner of Reedley, California. The school has an average enrollment of 190 students each year. It continues to offer a God-centered education, featuring a Bible curriculum combined with a complete high school academic program. Ten full-time and one half-time teachers are on the Immanuel faculty. Recent years have seen the erection of a gymnasium and chapel. Other buildings on the campus include a home economics and cafeteria building, administration building with six classrooms, study hall-library and a shop building.

## M. B. High Schools

No mosaic of Canadian Mennonite Brethren life would be complete without reference to the role of private high schools. During the last two decades of rural-urban shift in the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada these schools have attempted to give a Christ-centered high school education to atomic-age young people. At the same time they have carried on the tradition of denominational education on the secondary level.

During the past fifteen years nearly one thousand young people have graduated from Mennonite Brethren high schools across Canada. What prompted parents to send these young people to a denominational high school? Why did the churches and societies start and maintain these costly institutions for their young people? The answer might be given in the words of Harold Dyck, a teacher and principal in our high schools, who wrote that the purpose of Christian education is to bring "the learner into an appreciation of the life that is cherished by the group of which he is a member . . . against the background of a theistic (Biblical) *Weltanschauung*." Christian education is to "foster and promote in its students a constant, commanding, or even governing spiritual attitude." Another teacher, Henry H. Dueck, wrote that the Christian high school's purpose is "to mould the



In library research students broaden the base for a sound academic development.

character of its students and develop a philosophy of life which displays a sincere dedication to a Christ-centered life of service to fellow-men and country." To achieve this aim, religious courses have been added to the curriculum to complement the Christ-centered classroom approach in other subjects. Classes in Bible study, introduction into the Old and New Testaments, Christian ethics, and Mennonite history prepare young people for their place in a Mennonite Brethren Church.

Already during the difficult depression years of the 1930's leading brethren in provinces not having access to schools such as the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, Manitoba, and the Rosthern Academy in Saskatchewan made tentative moves toward founding private high schools. But these dreams were not realized until financial conditions improved during World War II. In 1944 three high school grades were added to the Bible school at South Abbotsford, British Columbia. By next fall high schools had come into being at Yarrow, British Columbia; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Virgil, Ontario, while another high school began at Coaldale, Alberta, in 1946.

The Mennonite Educational Institute at Clearbrook, British Columbia has become the largest Mennonite high school in Canada. From an attendance of forty-three in 1944 the school's enrollment climbed to a record 505 in 1958-59. The doubling of the enrollment during the early years of the school forced the construction of a \$50,000 educational plant in 1946 on a new campus. In 1954, the construction of a junior high school

added four classrooms and other facilities to the school. Since then another two classrooms have been added and a combination manual training, home economics and music building is now under construction.

This past year (1959-60) a total of 476 pupils with just over 200 in the junior high school, filled the rooms of Mennonite Educational Institute. A staff of seventeen gave instruction in thirteen classrooms to grades 7 to 13. Of these teachers, seven are graduates or former students of the school. W. A. Wiebe is the principal of the school. The school board, which includes representatives from six Mennonite Brethren and one General Conference Mennonite churches, faced the task of raising an \$82,600 budget.

The Mennonite settlement at Yarrow, British Columbia, booming because of high raspberry prices in the middle 1940's, began its own private high school in 1945. A committee headed by Rev. J. A. Harder succeeded in making a 150-student high school a reality in 1945. A subsequent jump in enrollment led the Yarrow, Greendale and East Chilliwack Mennonite Brethren churches to construct a large educational plant with classroom space for more than the 300 students. Yet in 1949 the school building had to be turned over to the public school board because an economic recession forced abandonment of the enterprise.

Nothing daunted, a group of Mennonite Brethren members formed a society in 1951 and re-opened another Sharon Mennonite Brethren Collegiate in the buildings used in 1945. Beginning with sixty-four students in grades 7 to 10, the school has grown to its present enrollment of 114 in grades

6 to 12. The students and staff now function in a school built in 1953 and an auditorium added in 1955. Hugo Friesen as principal heads a staff of seven teachers. The school has an annual budget totalling \$28,000.

In Coaldale, Alberta, Mennonite Brethren with a vision formed a Mennonite Educational Society in 1946. This group moved a former church building onto property acquired near the Mennonite Brethren Church and opened classes that fall with an enrollment of forty-one students and two teachers. Classrooms were added in 1949 and in 1951, with an auditorium completing the campus construction in 1958. Three teachers' residences have also been constructed, while non-resident students stay in a dormitory.

The past year ninety-three students enrolled in grades 7 to 12 at the Alberta Mennonite High School which has a staff of five, headed by Principal Peter Loewen. The budget totaled \$40,000 for the 1959-60 academic year. Early in 1960 the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church decided to take over operation of the school, a step welcomed by the Society because of the heavy financial burden borne by it during the past fourteen years.

Canada's heaviest concentration of Mennonites can be found in Winnipeg, Manitoba. By 1945 enough Mennonite Brethren residents in Manitoba's capital city were interested in a private high school to found the M. B. Collegiate Institute. The school first held classes in the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, but in 1947 it moved into its own building next door on Talbot Avenue. Major alterations in the early 1950's increased the school's capacity to 180 students with dormitory facilities provided

Singing and music are vital areas of training in all of our schools.





for girls. After twelve years of operation by a society the school was handed over to the Mennonite Brethren churches in Winnipeg and to rural churches willing to participate in the project. This resulted in further expansion during the past winter with the construction of a large auditorium and other facilities. This year enrollment at M. B. Collegiate Institute totals 258 in grades 7 to 12 with a staff of eight giving instruction. Henry Dick has been principal for the last several years. He is succeeded by Peter Klassen. The budget for the 1959-60 school year has been set at \$62,550.

Another high school first organized as part of a Bible school is Eden Christian College. In 1945 the Eden Bible School accepted students for grades 9 and 10. However, the facilities proved inadequate and a separate high school building was constructed in 1947. In 1948 the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Conference accepted the responsibility for operation of the school. An auditorium and another classroom wing constructed in 1955 completed campus construction. In 1959-60 student enrollment stood at 137. A staff of six provides instruction in grades 9 to 12. David H. Neumann, upon his recent resignation, completed ten years as principal of this institution. He is succeeded by Rudy Bartel. The budget of \$47,000 for the past year also takes into account the maintenance of a dormitory for part of the student body.

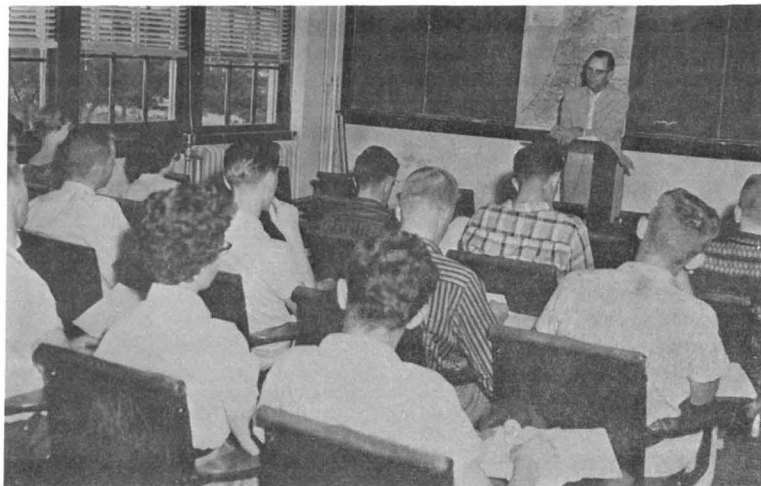
It should be noted that all of these schools serve a much wider constituency than the Mennonite Brethren Church. Many denominations are represented in the student bodies.

If Mennonite high schools in Canada are to continue to make a distinctive contribution to the Mennonite Brethren Church in this industrial age several issues will need to be tackled vigorously by the school boards and faculties. Among these are greater participation by all members in the financial undergirding of the schools; a Mennonite Brethren interpretation of history; an adequate interpretation of modern science; and the provision of an adequate supply of properly qualified, Bible-orientated teachers. As we prayerfully and unitedly seek the guidance of the Lord in these matters we believe that He will help us to give a Christian high school training to many of our young people.

## Bible Schools in Canada

Religious education has consistently occupied a major role in the hundred-year history of our brotherhood. The Bible school movement constitutes an important segment in this emphasis on formal Christian training. We praise the Lord that He has raised up men and institutions within the framework of our Conference to meet the varied spiritual needs of the past years.

The rapid development of different phases of Christian education in our churches emphasized the



In church schools teacher and students create a classroom experience in a spiritual atmosphere.

need for Christians with a vital Bible knowledge and an intimate relationship with the Lord. These should be able to assume responsibilities and leadership in Sunday school work, youth work, and other areas of Christian service. The Bible schools were called into existence to meet this need. The spiritual growth of lay Christians was one of the primary aims of these institutions. With a distinct emphasis on Bible study, spiritual maturity, and practical service opportunities, workers were trained for the church program. However, not only lay workers, but also pastors, evangelists, and missionaries have been prepared in the Bible schools. Thus these institutions have made a vital contribution in two distinct areas: the preparation of workers for the Christian ministry, and the development of lay Christians to assume spiritual responsibility in every vocation.

The spiritual aims and ideals of numerous men of God led to the formal organization of a total of ten Bible schools in our Canadian constituency. Besides these there were several short-term undertakings of a more local nature which also made a genuine contribution. Five of the original ten schools are in existence today with one located in each of five provinces.

The formal Bible school movement was begun in Herbert, Saskatchewan, under the leadership of Rev. J. F. Harms in 1913. Harms had been offering short one-month courses in different churches for several years prior to this year. Over a period of many years this work flourished and experienced the blessings of God. Hundreds of students enjoyed religious instruction in the halls of Herbert Bible School, and churches throughout the Canadian constituency reaped spiritual benefits from the ministry of its graduates. In 1958 the Herbert Bible School was amalgamated with the Bethany Bible Institute at Hepburn.

The second Bible School in our Canadian constituency was organized in Winkler, Manitoba, in 1925 as the Pniel Bible School. The founder and outstanding figure of this institution was Rev. A. H. Unruh. His insight and energy have contributed directly to the founding of the later Bible schools. Pniel was administered by an association until 1944, when it was accepted by the Manitoba Conference. The present principal of Pniel is Brother John Goossen.

The efforts of brethren like J. F. Harms to offer short-term Bible courses from 1911-1927 in the different churches of Saskatchewan, especially Hepburn, resulted in the organization of the Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, in 1927. At the outset Rev. D. P. Esau was the sole instructor. Since 1945 the principal of this school has been Rev. J. H. Epp. It is significant for the Bible school movement that Bethany has undertaken a hundred thousand dollar building project in the erection of a new administration building.

In 1929 the doors of the Coaldale Bible School were opened with Rev. A. J. Schierling as instructor. Over a period of many years this school has enjoyed a good student attendance with a peak of 101 students in 1948. Coaldale Bible School is undergoing a crisis but has been able to continue its teaching program without any interruptions. In the school year 1959-60, Rev. A. J. Konrad served as principal.

On the West Coast the Bible school movement began in Yarrow in 1930 under the influence of Rev. Peter P. Loewen. Some of the first instructors were the brethren P. Loewen, J. A. Harder, and G. Sukkau. This school also functioned under the visible blessing of the Lord. During the ministry of Rev. C. C. Peters as principal the student attendance reached 150. In 1955 the doors of this school

were forced to close due to a rapidly dwindling student enrollment. Since then the students from Yarrow have attended the Bible School at Clearbrook.

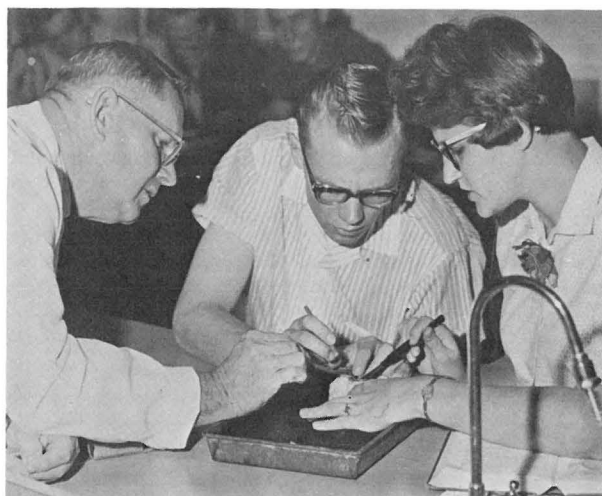
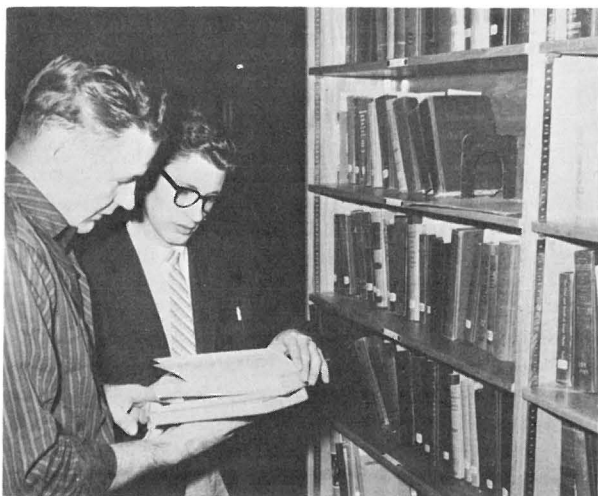
The second Bible school in the province of Alberta was begun in 1933 in Gem. Much of the initiative was given by Rev. G. D. Huebert. Other brethren associated with the beginning of this institution were the brethren G. Thielman and H. Unger. The school served the local needs and continued with some interruptions, until 1957.

In 1938 the Bible school work in the eastern churches of our Conference began. Rev. I. T. Ewert was the instructor of an evening school in Virgil, Ontario, in that year. The next year the Virgil-Vineland Bible School Society was formed and Rev. B. B. Boldt became the instructor of the new day school in Vineland. Due to the war the doors of this school were closed during 1941-1942. Classes were resumed in Virgil in 1943 and as a result a new society was formed in the spring of the next year. Work continued under the auspices of the Virgil Bible School Society until 1948, when the Ontario Conference assumed the administrative responsibility. Rev. W. Kornelsen is the principal of the Ontario Bible School located in Kitchener at present.

The second Bible school on the West Coast was begun in Sardis, B. C., in 1938 under the direction of Rev. G. H. Dyck. Decreasing student attendance necessitated the transfer of the Sardis students to the Yarrow Bible School in the fall of 1943.

The Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute began to function in Abbotsford in 1943 as the result of the persistent efforts of these local M. B. churches. The brethren W. Reimche, F. C. Thiessen, and J. F. Redekopp were some of the earliest instructors. A new administration building occasioned the transfer of the school campus to Clearbrook in 1955. In June, 1960, a significant development took place,

The search for knowledge united with a will to serve God leads to an effective witness.



when the M. B. Conference of British Columbia accepted the full responsibility for the one remaining Bible school of the province. The present principal is Rev. G. G. Konrad.

The last institution of this type to open its doors was the East Chilliwack Bible School. Under the able leadership of Rev. G. Thielmann this school functioned from 1947 till 1956. The reason for the discontinuation of this work was also the decreasing number of students. Students from this area are now availing themselves of the Institute at Clearbrook.

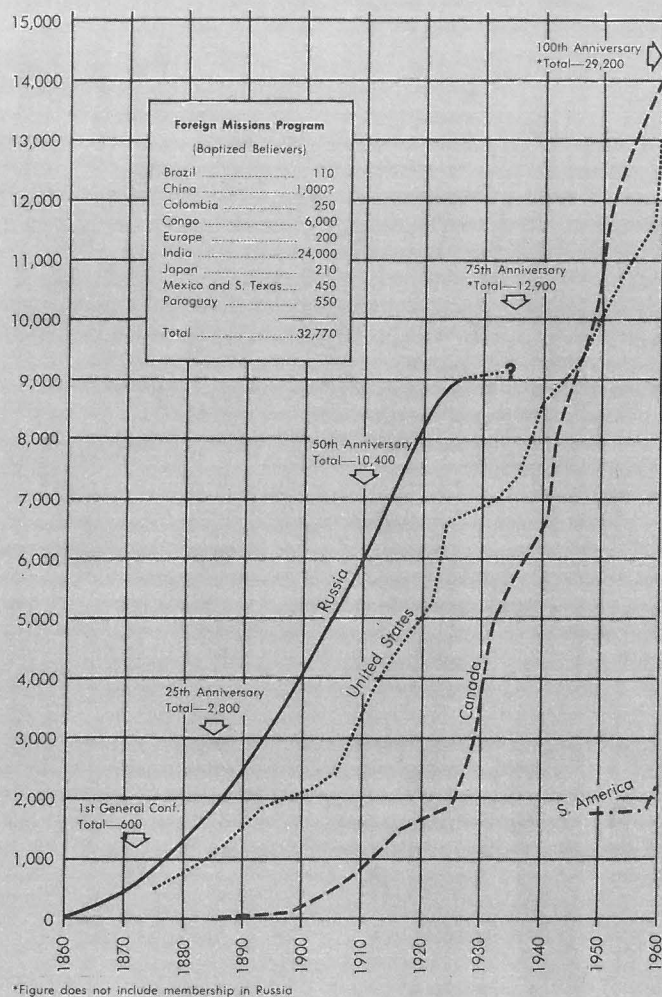
Has the Bible School movement been successful? Much evidence indicates that the aims of the Bible schools have been realized in the lives of thousands of individuals. Statistical surveys state that over fifty per cent of graduates of the Bible schools enter into the Christian ministry. In terms of the spiritual state of the church, the missionary emphasis and outreach, the countless lay workers, and the preaching ministry with its evangelistic emphasis and doctrinal integrity, the contribution of these institutions has been of global significance.

Dare we project the future of these schools which have so obviously enjoyed the blessings of the Lord, but which have also undergone serious crises in the last decade? New trends and developments which have engulfed our whole brotherhood in the last century can certainly not be overlooked by the Bible schools. It appears that the future of these schools will not be found in the smaller, local church-sponsored schools, but rather in the larger institutions which can better meet the educational demands of our time.

The educational status of the average student in the Bible schools has changed radically in the past fifteen years. Seventy-five per cent have now completed their high school training before they come to Bible school. The remaining twenty-five per cent have not enjoyed this privilege. This will necessitate a versatile curriculum which is able to meet the needs of students with such a varied educational background. A concomitant fact of higher student education is the increase of academic qualifications of the faculty. Better facilities will be required to satisfy the demands of our credit-conscious young people.

Despite the rapid change which our Bible schools will need to undergo in the future, their continued existence appears to be justified. Modern trends of professionalism, secularism, worldliness, and skepticism place a great challenge before the Christian world—especially the Christian young people. This challenge can be adequately met only on the sure foundation of the Word of God. There is an urgent need for a multitude of individuals who have accepted the Bible as the Word of God which demands obedience. Academic pursuits will probably be intensified in the next century of our existence. Such a time as this demands a commensurate spiritual emphasis, evangelistic fervor, and

M. B. MEMBERSHIP GROWTH—1860-1960



missionary vision to counterbalance the secularism of our time. This emphasis could well originate from an adequate Bible program. Such a program would underline the importance of the direct study of the Bible, it would be cognizant of ever-changing cultural conditions, it would consciously relate its teaching curriculum to practical-life situations, it would meet the needs of students with varied academic backgrounds, it would have adequate facilities enabling it to remain educationally respectable, and it would be under the direction of individuals who are Spirit-filled and dedicated to the cause of the Lord in the Bible school work.

\* \* \*

"The greater the variety of schools to which our young people go, the greater will be the difficulty in maintaining unity of aim and spirit in our churches."—H. W. Lohrenz.





## M. B. Publishing House

History shows that no denomination having its own publishing house and its own schools of higher learning has ever disintegrated completely, for an informed constituency always tends to be a more loyal and united constituency.

That the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House and its publications have been vital and unifying forces in the Mennonite Brethren brotherhood is without question. The work of publications has promoted unity in creating a denominational consciousness. It has helped to create theological unity. It has helped to advance missionary enthusiasm and enterprise. It has promoted education, relief and other conference efforts. It has provided devotional, educational and informative reading materials through its periodicals and through its distribution of Christian literature. It has provided Christian nurture especially through the Sunday school literature. It has supplied some of the musical needs of the brotherhood.

The work of publications has met a need which the Mennonite Brethren in North America saw less than 25 years after the founding of the brotherhood when the Conference of 1883 appointed Brother Bernhard Pauls of Coffey County, Kansas to gather reports from the evangelists and have them printed. Since he received no reports the assignment could not be carried out.

The Conference of 1884, however, elected a committee of three brethren—Abr. Schellenberg, Dietrich Claassen and J. F. Harms—giving them the three-fold assignment: 1. to work toward the writing of a history of our brotherhood; 2. to make public our conference reports, and 3. to arrange for the brotherhood to have a periodical of its own.

Since plans for the production of a history of the brotherhood had also been begun in Russia the new committee refrained from this task, but went actively to work, had the Conference report printed at Elkhart, Indiana and held numerous meetings regarding the establishment of a conference periodical. Out of these meetings came the establishment of the *Zionsbote* at the beginning of 1885 as a four-page periodical. It was issued every three months at a subscription rate of 25 cents per year. The in-

dividual issues were sent to the churches in bundles and were distributed there.

Selected to be the first editor of the *Zionsbote* was the 29-year-old J. F. Harms. He continued in this capacity till 1906 and became the pioneer in the publication efforts of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in America. Some years he received \$50, some years \$25, and other years he received no remuneration for his services as editor. After two years as a quarterly, the *Zionsbote* became a monthly periodical. In 1889 it became a weekly.

From its very beginning the *Zionsbote* found good reception among the brethren in Russia, who sent their reports to be included in its pages instead of printing them in Russia. Thus the *Zionsbote* served as a major link which united the brotherhood in America and Russia.

In Russia the Mennonite Brethren Conference at no time owned its own publishing house and publication efforts were mainly private. Outstanding among these efforts was Raduga, the Christian publishing house in Neu-Halbstadt, which was owned by an organization consisting mostly of Mennonite Brethren under the leadership and editorship of Jak. and Abr. Kroeker. It produced devotional calendars, tracts, books and the periodical *Friedensstimme*, which was published from 1903 until World War I.

The two major contributions of the Mennonite Brethren in Russia in publications consist of the *Glaubensbekenntnis* and of *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland* by P. M. Friesen.

In 1904 the Conference in North America proceeded to establish its first publishing house at Medford, Oklahoma, with J. F. Harms, who resided there, as editor and manager. With \$100 advanced by a brother, Harms ordered Bibles from Germany and began our first Conference book business. Also during this year the *Lektionsblaetter*, which were generally used throughout our brotherhood, were purchased for \$100 from Brother P. F. Duerksen, who had produced them since 1899. Thus our Conference began the ministry of producing Sunday school literature.

In 1904 the Conference accepted *Golos*, a Russian language leaflet edited by Brother Herman Fast of

Saskatchewan, as a mission project to the Russian people. It was begun in 1905 and continued until 1912.

When Brother Harms resigned as editor and manager of the Publishing House at the 1906 Conference sessions, the delegation extended a call to A. L. Schellenberg, son of Elder Abr. Schellenberg, to this position. Upon his acceptance the publication effort of the Conference was moved to McPherson, Kansas at the beginning of 1907. Here a building had been purchased for \$2,500 and the work moved forward with new impetus. At the 1909 Conference sessions it was, however, agreed that McPherson was not a suitable place for our publishing house since it offered no German Sunday school nor day school for the families of the employees. Consequently, the Conference authorized a relocation.

By March of 1913 all equipment had been relocated to Hillsboro, where a printing plant and the weekly German family paper, *Vorwaerts*, had been purchased from Dr. J. J. Entz. By 1915 the substantial building which still constitutes the major part of the Publishing House was completed, new equipment purchased, and the work was progressing. Editor Schellenberg continued in his position until 1927, with exception of the years 1919 to 1922 when J. D. Fast served as editor and manager.

In 1922 the Publishing House purchased a local bookstore and Brother P. H. Berg was hired to serve as its manager and to assist in the work in general. At the Conference of 1930 he was named editor and manager of the Publishing House. He

continued to serve as editor of the *Zionsbote* until the end of 1953 and as manager of the Publishing House till 1948 and again from 1951 to 1953. Brother A. J. Voth, a long-time employee of the Publishing House, served as manager from 1948 through 1951. Brother J. J. Gerbrandt served during 1953. The bookstore has continued its services to the constituency in an increasing volume up to the present time.

As the constituency moved more and more from the German to the English, it became necessary to produce materials in both languages. Thus the 1936 Conference at Reedley, California called the *Christian Leader* into existence. Brother P. H. Berg served as editor from 1937 through 1939 and Brother J. W. Vogt from 1940 to 1953. Upon request of the 1939 General Conference the Publishing House began the production of English *Graded Sunday School Lessons* in 1940. In 1950 the English *Adult Quarterly* replaced the *Graded Sunday School Lessons*. To further accommodate the language change the name of the *Vorwaerts* was changed to *Hillsboro Journal* in 1939. At this time the paper was made bilingual, offering both German and English. In 1953 the Publishing House sold the *Hillsboro Journal*. It was subsequently merged with another local paper.

In 1949 the Publishing House undertook an expansion program whereby an \$18,000 addition was added to the building and about \$24,000 was spent by 1953 for more adequate equipment in order to serve the publication needs of the brotherhood more fully.

Our publishing work is basically a missionary project by which we communicate the truth of the Gospel.



M. B. Publishing House, Hillsboro, Kansas



Another change of administration came with the beginning of 1954 when Brother Orlando Harms assumed the position of manager as well as editor of the *Zionsbote* and the *Christian Leader*.

During the last few years both of these periodicals as well as the financial structure of the business have been strengthened, so that the indebtedness has been liquidated and the business brought on a sound financial basis. In addition many improvements have been made and much equipment has been purchased to increase the efficiency and the service of the Publishing House. All improvements and equipment have been paid for upon acquisition.

In addition to considerable reorganization of the business another great advance came to the cause of publications when the first U. S. Area Conference in 1957 voted to support publications by having each U. S. church contribute on the basis of a norm of \$5.00 per family per year to publications. In return the *Christian Leader* was to be sent to every family of the constituency. Upon ratification by the U. S. churches this plan went into effect in 1958. This enlarged the circulation of the *Leader* and helped to improve the financial position of the Publishing House materially.

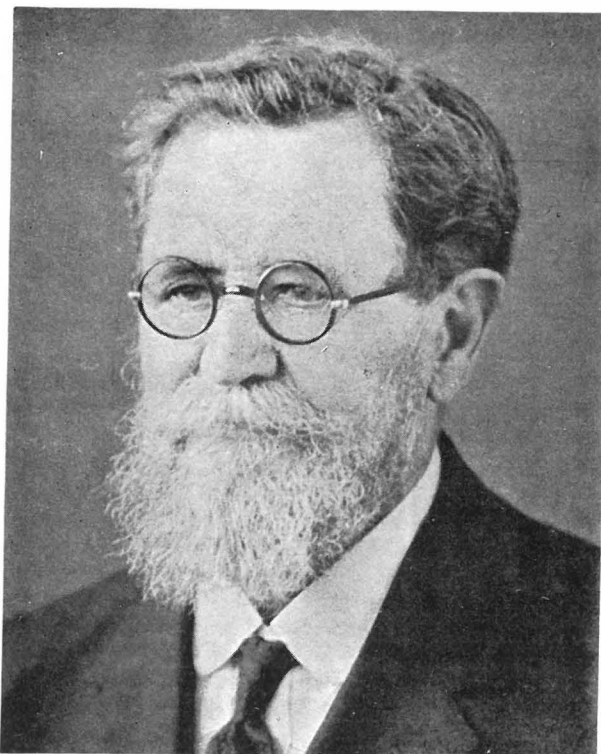
Other changes resulting from the 1957 General Conference sessions were that beginning with 1958 *The Christian Leader* was issued every other week as a 24-or-more-page periodical instead of being issued semi-monthly on a 16-page basis. Due to the declining use of the German the *Zionsbote* was at the same time changed from a weekly issuance to bi-weekly issuance with a 16-page per issue basis. Beginning with 1956 the *Lektionsheft*, a 48-page quarterly, had been enlarged to 64 pages and departmentalized on the same basis as the English *Adult Quarterly*.

Circulation of the regular publications produced by the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House stood approximately as follows during the centennial year of 1960; *Christian Leader*—6,000; *Zionsbote*—1,500; *Adult Quarterly*—13,500, *Lektionsheft*—7,000.

In addition to these the Publishing House produces the *Tabor College View* and many brochures and folders for various interests and boards of our Conference.

During this centennial year the Publishing House also moved into offset printing by acquiring a small offset press, camera, plate-making and other necessary equipment. A new front on the first floor level of the Publishing House building was also added. The net worth of the business at the end of the 1960 fiscal year stood at \$112,459.31.

Although the Mennonite Brethren have not made many contributions in the field of writing, a number of productions have come into print through the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, some being printed on a job basis and others being produced by the Publishing House. Among these are the fol-



J. F. Harms (1855-1945). Early leader in publication and first editor of *ZIONSbote*.

lowing: *Jesus kommt wieder* and *Topical Outline Studies of Bible Doctrine* by H. F. Toews; the *Confession of Faith* (both German and English); *Fundamentals of Faith and Working by Prayer* by D. Edmond Hiebert; *Die kurzgefasste Einleitung ins Alte Testament* by A. H. Unruh; *Der Ratschluss Gottes mit der Menschheit* by J. W. Reimer; *The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church* by J. H. Lohrenz; *Sixty Years of M. B. Missions* by Mrs. H. T. Esau; *Your Church and You* by Frank C. Peters, and many other booklets and books. Song books which have been produced are *Saenger-Bote*, *Neue Zions Lieder*, and the *Mennonite Brethren Church Hymnal* of which the fourth edition is now being printed.

In 1946 the Publishing House joined with the publication boards of the General Conference Mennonites and the (Old) Mennonites in the production of *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*. The first volume of this 3,895 page set appeared in 1955 and the fourth and final volume in 1959.

Despite frequent problems, difficulties, shortcomings and shortsightedness in our publication efforts, God has used the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House in many ways to further His cause. What our brotherhood would be at this centennial juncture without it, is known only to Him. How much more could have and should have been done, is also known to Him.



There are many detailed steps between the written word and the printed word.

To Him also the future is known. Without being presumptuous, however, certain prospects and needs for the future of publications in the Mennonite Brethren Conference can be foreseen. Among these are the following:

1. The German language productions of the Publishing House will continue to decline and eventually cease.

2. More books and books of greater significance, written by Mennonite Brethren writers will be produced not only for our brotherhood but for the gen-

eral Christian market. This will require the discovery and nurture of creative literary talent.

3. More Bible and historical study materials will be produced for our brotherhood.

4. A youth periodical or periodicals, youth program and study materials will be produced.

5. More and higher quality of informational literature in various areas of conference endeavors will have to be produced.

6. More and more emphasis will be placed upon art and color appeal in the printed product, requiring greater specialization, versatility, personnel and expensive graphic arts equipment.

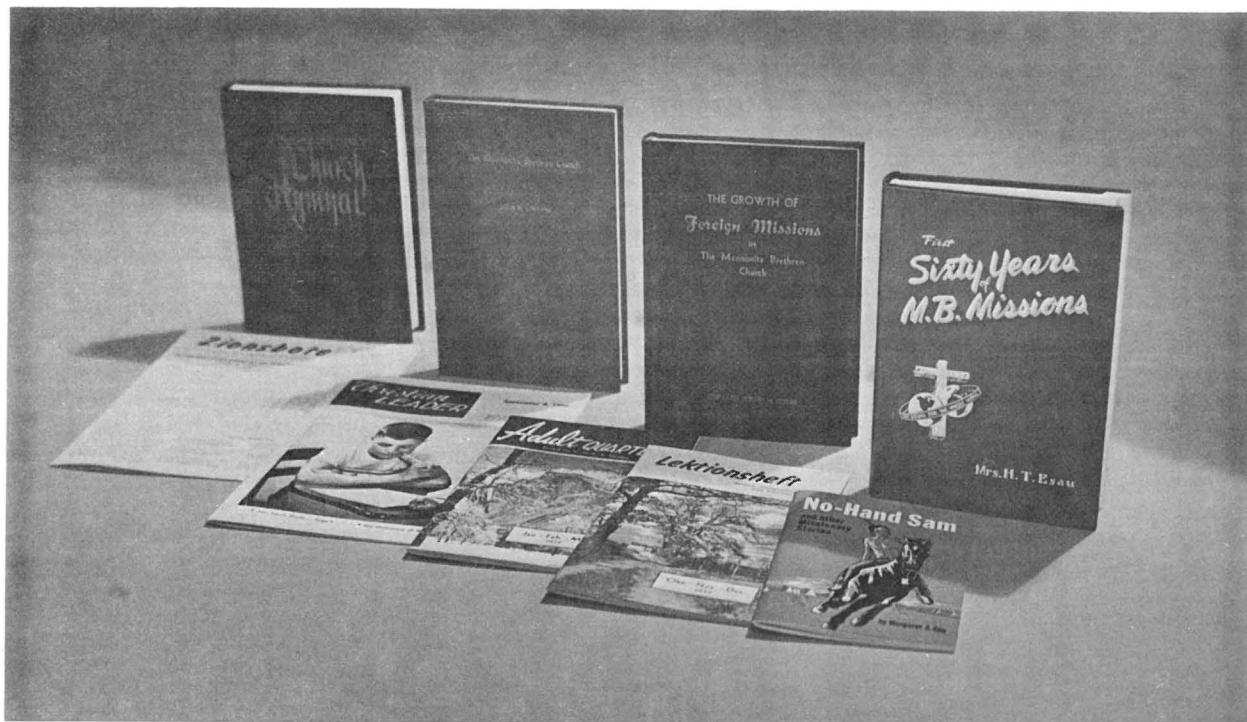
7. In the light of the increased demands which are apparent in writing, production, and financial outlays, it will be increasingly imperative that various Mennonite and evangelical groups work in closer co-operation in the production of these materials.

8. If the challenges and obligations of the future are to be met to the glory of God and the furtherance of the Mennonite Brethren brotherhood, the prayers and the active and financial support of the work of publications by the brotherhood will be more imperative and of greater significance than ever before.

It has been said that religious journalism is next in importance to the preaching of the Gospel. To realize this and to act commensurately is the challenge to our Mennonite Brethren brotherhood at this centennial juncture.

The Publishing House, though it must continue to be a unifying force, must be more than that. It must point new directions for God. It must be an instigator of changes of people's opinions, their

Church publications and books strengthen our work and witness.



minds and their hearts through the literature it produces, for one of the greatest forces in the world for good or evil is the 25 one-hundred-thousandths of an inch of ink on humble paper.

## Mennonitische Rundschau

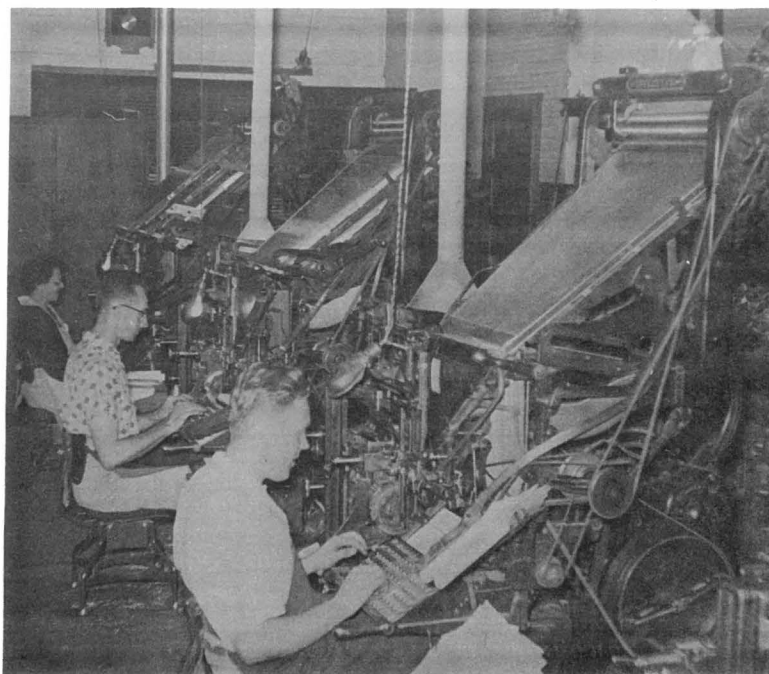
As a direct successor to the *Nebraska Ansiedler*, the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, oldest Mennonite periodical to appear continuously under one name, was first published in June, 1880 by the Mennonite Publishing Company under the direction of John F. Funk. This paper was to serve the newly established Russian Mennonite communities in the prairie states and in Manitoba, Canada. It appeared as a semi-monthly until the end of 1882. Since then it has been a weekly. Beginning with 1883 a semi-monthly edition was published for readers in Europe and Asia apparently to keep the Mennonites in Russia in contact with American Mennonites.

The *Mennonitische Rundschau* was the paper of the Russian Mennonites for decades, and still carries something of this character. The Mennonite Publishing Co., Elkhart, Indiana published it till 1908. From 1908 to 1923 the Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pennsylvania published it. In 1923 the publication of the two German-language weeklies of the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, *Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Christlicher Jugendfreund* were transferred to Winnipeg by Hermann H. Neufeld, who at that time established the Rundschau Publishing House.

In 1940 the Rundschau Publishing House was re-organized into The Christian Press Ltd. In 1945 this corporation was purchased by a group of brethren in the Canadian Conference. The Canadian Conference purchased 400 shares of this corporation in 1946 and 600 in 1956. At the sessions in Virgil, Ontario in 1960 the Conference moved to purchase the remaining 3,750 shares and has thus become the sole owner. With this purchase the *Mennonitische Rundschau* has also become the property of the Canadian Conference.

The *Mennonitische Rundschau* has consistently carried on as a religious Mennonite family paper. Though it has been looked upon by some as a Mennonite Brethren organ, it has not been a Conference paper.

During the eighty years of its publication this paper has recorded the history of the Russian Mennonites, their trials and tribulations, emigrations and immigrations, drafting of their young men for government forestry service, family life, church life, education and social matters, wars and revolutions, terrible persecutions, refugee problems, pioneering in five countries in South America, language changes and economic struggles—all these happenings and more have been chronicled by the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. If the eighty volumes of annual issues could be bound and collected in one library



Setting type is the beginning of the process of printing Christian literature.

they would represent a tremendous source of historical data and drama. But not only that, the religious trends and thoughts emerging in the course of the eighty years of Mennonite history have found expression in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. Providentially, we believe, the views and interpretations of Holy Scripture as held by the Mennonite Brethren Church have appeared as the predominant ones in this paper, although only a few of the editors were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Editors of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* have been:

|                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Probably John F. Funk to..... | 1880         |
| John F. Harms.....            | 1880-1885    |
| Probably John F. Funk.....    | 1886-1896    |
| D. F. Jantzen.....            | 1896-1898    |
| G. G. Wiens.....              | 1899-1903    |
| M. B. Fast.....               | 1904-1910    |
| C. B. Wiens.....              | 1910-1920    |
| W. M. Winsinger.....          | 1920-1923    |
| Hermann H. Neufeld.....       | 1923-1945    |
| H. F. Klassen.....            | 1945-present |

In 1901 the *Herold der Wahrheit* was combined with the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, and in 1941 the *Christlicher Jugendfreund* became a department of it.

The motto of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* through the years has been, "Lasset uns fleissig sein, zu halten die Einigkeit im Geist."



# Sunday School

Sunday school has been an integral part of the Mennonite Brethren Church from the time of its inception. In the beginning it was not so well organized and qualified as later on, but its place in the church never was a question as far as we can learn from our history. The Sunday school was taken so much for granted that there was little questioning or discussion about it at any of the conventions. Dr. A. H. Unruh, in his book *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde*, gives the following regarding the Mennonite Brethren Sunday School (freely translated from the German):

Since I cannot find any information in the literature pertaining to the Mennonite Brethren Sunday School, I am recounting from memory what I have learned to know about the Sunday Schools in the early Mennonite Brethren Churches. As a child I attended such myself; then I also learned to know them as an adult. Sunday schools of the Mennonite Brethren churches served largely as a means of evangelistic outreach of the church. That is to say, the emphasis was upon experiencing salvation. The teachers were, as a rule, such as bore a burden for the lost and welcomed this opportunity to give instruction with a warm evangelistic emphasis which, however, was not necessarily narrowly denominational.

It must not be forgotten that the Mennonite Brethren had as a background a sound system of religious education which was a part of the public school system. Children of Mennonite origin were obliged to study religion in school. The lessons were perhaps somewhat theoretical, lacked warmth, and didn't inspire personal appropriation, but the facts of the Bible were well taught.

The Sunday school had an undisputed place in the brethren's mission of propagating the Gospel. It gave concerned workers in the church an opportunity to be active in the Kingdom, winning not only souls but also lives for eternity.

No record is found of lessons especially adapted for Sunday schools. Nor do we read of any attempts made to improve teaching in the Sunday schools. No record of conventions for such purposes is known. The philosophy of the early brethren seems to have been to assign learning to the public schools, and to look upon the Sunday schools as a supplement to evangelize rather than to train the children. Brother Unruh states that adults, as a rule, did not attend Sunday schools. It was, there-

fore, somewhat new for the brethren emigrating from Russia to be expected to attend Sunday school here in America. But when they understood the policy of separation of state and church and learned that to the church fell the responsibility of teaching religion and morals if the church's part was to be fulfilled, they accepted wholeheartedly the Sunday school as a medium to provide religious education.

## Early Sunday Schools

Most of the early Mennonite Brethren settled in the U. S. A. Some 200 families settled in Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota. From here extension work brought newly-founded Mennonite Brethren churches westward as far as the Pacific coast and northward into Canada.

The Sunday school issue was always a live one; this can be seen from the minutes of the General Conference, 1883-1919. In 1883, the Conference recorded a recommendation to all churches to encourage Sunday school work, "since this is our mission to the children."

In 1888 the Conference was concerned to raise the standard of the Sunday schools; it was then decided to call a Sunday school convention for that purpose.

In 1889 the need for greater uniformity among the Sunday schools of the Conference was realized in particular. The Sunday School Convention was charged with the responsibility of finding ways to achieve this.

Regarding lesson material, we find in the minutes of 1900 that the Publication Committee reported that *Sunday School Lessons*, *Sonntagschulbote* and *Kinderblaetter* were sold in such amounts that the Conference need not subsidize them.

The minutes from 1902, and again from 1906, show that editors were engaged for specialized work. Brother D. D. Bartel served as editor for choosing titles for the lessons, and Brother N. N. Hiebert served for almost a decade as editor for the quarterlies. The latter also served as associate member in the curriculum committee of the International Council of Religious Education.

An interesting observation may be noted here, namely that the Mennonite Brethren in early as well as in later years have had no close collabora-

tion with other Mennonites, although history records a great interest in Sunday school among the various Mennonite churches. Whereas many of the largest denominations lost Sunday school members during the time of 1926, the Mennonite Sunday school membership grew from 87,897 to 113,136. It seems that the Mennonite Brethren participated in evangelical county or state Sunday school conventions in the measure that they changed from the German to the English language in their church services. In a recent survey it was disclosed that the Mennonite Brethren Sunday schools purchased their lesson material, except that for adults, which is supplied by our own Publishing House, from no fewer than fifteen different publishing houses, among them being such sources as would have seemed questionable to our early Mennonite Brethren fathers. This is mentioned here only to show how the need for greater unification was felt, and how ways of realizing it were sought.

#### *Sunday School in the Northern District*

In Canada, the Sunday school was always more a part of the development of the church itself. When the brethren from the United States came to Manitoba to conduct evangelistic meetings and the converts were gathered into churches, the Sunday school was considered a definite part of the church. The Sunday school also developed more along denominational lines, and this for several reasons: 1) The Mennonite Brethren used the German language in their services. The government tolerantly permitted the Mennonites to teach and use the German language in their schools; 2) the establishment of Bible Schools had a strengthening effect upon the Sunday schools; and 3) the steady influx of new Mennonite Brethren immigrants from Russia. The German language served as a protective measure and kept the Mennonite Brethren separate from other groups. The Bible schools, of which Herbert Bible School was the first (founded in 1913), trained teachers for Sunday schools. Winkler Bible School

(founded in 1925), had a strong department of Christian education. The coming of the Brethren from Russia also brought a new demand for German Sunday school lesson materials. The immigration also gave the Canadian Conference capable men who could produce lesson materials in the German language. The Sunday school was a strong arm of the church in the service of Christian education.

When in 1931 The Evangelical Teacher Training Association was formed in the United States, the Canadian Bible schools readily accepted the invitation to become members in that association. Through this institution a new standard for Sunday schools, but especially for the training of Sunday school teachers, was established and in some measure enforced. When the need for English lesson materials became more acute, the Conference decided that a way should be sought to retain unity in the curriculum in spite of the diversity of language needs. This led to the arrangement with Scripture Press to adapt their outlines and translate them into German. The brethren A. H. Unruh, B. J. Braun, G. D. Huebert and others were charged with the responsibility of adapting these outlines to our denominational needs. The outlines remained but lessons were rewritten in the German language. Brother A. A. Kroeker, for years chairman of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Sunday School Committee, did much to make the enterprise of creating suitable lesson material a success. Now it was possible to use the German outlines, in accordance with sound pedagogical principles and also in the English language to meet a growing demand.

A great value of this lay in its psychological achievement. First, it made the Mennonite Brethren churches conscious of denominational needs which must be met in the Sunday school. Secondly, it united the Bible schools, the Sunday schools, and encouraged teacher training through conventions and church-sponsored training classes. Then, too, this prescribed a definite program for some Bible schools and served as a tremendous unifying agent throughout.

The appreciation for a study of the Word is deepened as the years go by.



### *Sunday School Materials*

The story of material for Sunday schools common to the United States and Canada is given by Brother Orlando Harms in the *Christian Leader* as follows:

"Twenty years ago (1939) the well known Rev. A. H. Unruh wrote a series of pupil's and teacher's quarterlies for Primary, Junior, and Intermediates, entitled *Ganze Bibel Gradierte Lektionen*. Since the English language was largely replacing the German in the United States, and since the circulation of these lessons and especially of the teacher's quarterlies was very small, the project proved impractical and too expensive and had to be dropped. In Canada, however, translation of Scripture Press materials into German and other efforts continued.

"Another effort in the direction of providing Sunday school materials for our younger classes was made when from 1940 through 1947 our English Sunday school quarterlies were called *Graded Sunday School Lessons* and offered exposition of the same lesson for Adults, Seniors, Intermediate, and Primary levels. Though called graded lessons, these were actually uniform lessons, since the lesson was the same for all levels.

"In 1948, our Conference shifted from International Lesson outlines to the National outlines produced by the National Sunday School Association. With this change the name of our English Sunday school quarterlies was changed to *Sunday School Lessons*. However, the expositions on the Adult and Senior, Intermediate, and Primary levels were retained as in the previous quarterlies.

"Beginning with 1950, an enlarged and improved quarterly called *Adult Quarterly* was produced. This quarterly made no efforts at providing lesson materials for lower level classes and has continued in its original form to the present time.

"Another step toward providing Sunday School material for our younger classes was taken at the 1945 General Conference sessions in Dinuba when the Sunday School Committee recommended the use of Scripture Press materials for these classes. This recommendation was accepted; however, it was emphasized that this was to be a stopgap measure until it would be possible to produce materials which would more specifically express the distinctives, principles, and background of our brotherhood. To help make Scripture Press material more useable in this regard, the 1948 General Conference sessions at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, decided to ask brethren of our Conference to write supplementary comments, giving our interpretation of Scripture Press Lessons. This was done between 1949 and 1951 by Brother B. J. Braun on the Primary level, and by Brother David Letkeman on the Junior level. Again, the plan proved impractical, and was discontinued in 1951.

"Through these efforts we learned that with the small volume our Conference has, the production of our own materials, especially if these were done in multicolor printing, would be impossible for us.

It also pointed out the fact that we do not have adequate personnel in our small Conference to produce this material. It thus became clear that we would either have to use materials produced by someone else or work together with others in order to produce common material which would meet our needs on the basis of our distinctives, background and particular interpretation of the Scriptures.

"Other Mennonite groups were facing the same problems that we faced. To see what could be done, the Curriculum Committee of the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education and the Mennonite Publication Board of the (Old) Mennonite Church met with the Editorial Committee of the Board of Education and Publication of the General Conference Church in 1952. At this meeting, a Joint Curriculum Committee was formed and efforts were begun to move cooperatively into the creation and production of Graded Sunday school materials.

As early as 1953 the Mennonite Brethren were invited to participate in the project. Though no moves were made on the U. S. side, the Canadian Sunday School Committee remained in contact with the project in an unofficial way. In 1957, the Canadian Conference moved to adopt this graded material and to have their own editors edit their edition. In 1958 the Canadian Conference made final moves for an imprint edition for itself.

"Although scattered voices in the United States expressed approval of this material, it was not until the time of the 1958 Pacific District Conference that the churches of the Pacific District decided to use this material and requested an edition with the Mennonite Brethren Conference imprint. Arrangements were welcomed and were made with our Canadian brethren to use the imprint of the entire conference on both sides of the border. In April, 1959, the U. S. Area Board for Sunday Schools and Related Activities also went on record endorsing this new material.

"Thus the Mennonite Brethren have again moved into the direction of getting Sunday school materials which will give more emphasis to the distinctive principles and Scriptural interpretations which we cherish as a brotherhood. Brethren who have edited the materials for our Conference are A. P. Regier, Calgary, Alberta; I. W. Redekopp, Winnipeg; and Orlando Harms, Hillsboro."

A number of publications have been issued by the Mennonite Brethren Church to strengthen the cause of Christian education. We see that in 1908 a *Sonntagschulbote* existed and *Kinderblaetter* were published. For a number of years the *Sunday School Builder* in the form of a newsletter, was circulated among the workers in the United States by the Sunday School Committee. In Canada, the *Sunday School Instructor* is published by the Canadian Sunday School Committee, and serves as a means of helping the workers to do better teaching. It also promotes such matters as our new Sunday school material and suggests material for special occasions.





Spiritual foundations are laid in young lives through the singing of hymns.

No Sunday school statistics are available for the total constituency, though the district conferences have some. The enrollment in the Mennonite Brethren Sunday school is, and has been for some time, about the same as the membership: about 14,000 for Canada, and about 13,000 for the United States.

In retrospect, we can discern a few principles underlying the Mennonite Brethren Sunday School philosophy as it comes to us from the past. We do well to learn to understand its implications for better work in the future. The Sunday school must be regarded as one of the most powerful institutions for religious instruction in the Mennonite Brethren Church. This applies to all age levels. The curriculum of the Sunday school is not to be underrated. What we would have in the lives of our members, we must first put into the Sunday school curriculum.

A Sunday school will be no stronger than its teaching force. The training of qualified teachers is most important and our brotherhood must ever be mindful of this. If our institutions of higher learning will not undergird the force of Christian education in the churches by strong Christian education programs, we will miss the core of Christian education. It is clear that we must reckon with our denominational needs. The cardinal doctrines of our faith must be inculcated in young and old on a level where they can understand and learn to appreciate them. We quote here from George P. Pardington's book, *Outline Studies in Christian Doctrine*: "We judge a man's theology by his creed. We judge a man's religion by his life. A creed is like a backbone. A man does not need to wear his backbone in front of him; but he must have a backbone and a

straight one, or he will be a flexible if not a hump-backed Christian."

Since the Sunday school is the core of Christian education in the Church, it can serve as a unifying agent. If our children learn the same lessons, our teachers discuss the same problems and all strive for common goals, we cannot help but be united.

The organization of the Sunday schools in Mennonite Brethren churches is simple, flexible, and Biblical. We lack a permanent organization in the Conference. There have been committees for Sunday school work in the district conferences and also on the General Conference level, but the turnover of officers is so great, that we cannot begin to name them. There is now a Church School Committee for the United States Conference and also a Sunday School Committee for the Canadian Conference. There is a Sunday School Committee for the General Conference consisting of seven members, three elected by each the United States and Canada, and a chairman elected at large. This committee has collaborated in united efforts.

Any success of Sunday school work must be attributed to those who have trained workers for this important work and those who have dedicated their talents to teaching in the Sunday schools. We must never forget those who made a significant contribution by writing Sunday school material. If ninety-eight per cent of our church members come to us from the Sunday schools, and this seems to be the case, then we can only speak as Paul spoke in 1 Cor. 3:7, 21: "Therefore, let no man glory in men. For all things are yours . . . So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

# City Missions

The vision of individual believers opened the spiritual eyes of the Conference for city mission work. As early as 1904 Brother and Sister B. F. Wiens felt called of the Lord for missionary service and joined Rev. H. A. Ramseyer of the Frontier Lumberman's Mission at Superior, Wisconsin. A report of this work at the 1907 Conference at Dalmeny, Saskatchewan aroused interest and occasioned the election of a City Missions Committee with J. J. Kliewer, N. N. Hiebert, and J. C. Dick as the first members.

This committee appointed Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wiens and Katharina Klassen (Mrs. P. A. Nickel) as the first city missionaries of our Conference to be stationed at Hurley, Wisconsin. Because of limitations of the field at Hurley, the work was transferred to Minneapolis in 1910 with Brother and Sister A. A. Smith as assistants. Conference interest in the work increased rapidly and in 1917 a building site was purchased at 2120 Minnehaha Avenue. Here the South Side Mission building was erected, a two-story edifice providing a chapel seating about 200, apartments for the missionaries and other facilities. When the Wienses left for China in 1911, the Smiths took charge.

A full program was carried on at the mission daily. The Sunday school, Gospel preaching, prayer meetings, Mothers' Club, Boys' Club, Men's Club, daily vacation Bible school, family banquets, summer camps, street meetings, and personal contacts—all these and others were avenues by which the unsaved were reached with the Gospel.

Throughout the years many churches have sent thousands of garments to help clothe the needy of this area. Others have sent barrels and boxes of dressed chickens each year to be used for the annual homecoming or family banquet. Students from Northwestern Bible School, Christian and Missionary Alliance School, and the University of Minnesota as well as many other people assisted in the work. The Lord gave spiritual fruit. A number of converts have gone from the Mission into full-time Christian service. Many active laymen look to the Mission as their spiritual birthplace.

Thirty workers besides many part-time helpers have helped in the work at South Side Mission. The A. A. Smiths spent over thirty years in this work. Other missionaries who have given from two to

fourteen years of service are Mrs. Anna Ross, Miss Catharine Pauls, Mrs. Tina Dahl Wall, Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Baerg, Rev. and Mrs. Melvin Schimnowski, Mr. and Mrs. George Martens, Rev. and Mrs. Chester Fast, Rev. and Mrs. Harry Beier.

The 1948 General Conference decided to discontinue operating the South Side Mission. In 1954 upon a motion of the General Conference the work of the Mission was transferred to the three district conferences in the United States. In 1956 the Southern and Pacific Districts released this property to the Central District. The Central District was to seek the organization of a Mennonite Brethren church at a new location in the city. Full transfer of property to the District was made in February, 1957.

In 1956 with the help of the Mountain Lake and Delft churches a group of charter members was organized into a church with Rev. Harry D. Beier as pastor. After nine months of hard work Brother Beier left, to be succeeded by Brother Paul W. Hiebert on a part-time basis. When Brother Hiebert asked to be relieved in order to finish his studies he was followed by Brother Robert C. Seibel on an interim basis. In 1959 Brother John F. Froese followed the call to become pastor of the church.

A new location for the church was found by purchasing a sanctuary at 39th Street and 10th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Thus the South Side Mission has become history, but the Lord is continuing His work in Minneapolis through the witness of a local church.

A second aspect of the city mission work of our General Conference has been a ministry to the Jews of Winnipeg. There was special interest and vision for the work among the Jews in the churches in Canada. Some of our members began to pray for a work of our own, while others went to serve among Jews where a work was established. Their reports of this work created further interest and concern for a ministry to the Jews. In time this came to the attention of leading brethren in Canada and they prayed that a field might be opened for our Conference. The City Mission Committee was burdened for a larger field of activity and when this phase of work came to their attention, the matter was carefully considered. A field in Winnipeg, Manitoba with its thousands of Jews was accepted

by the General Conference of 1948 with Brother and Sister J. J. Pankratz as missionaries.

The work among the Jews is both difficult and different, requiring much personal work. By means of the city directory the Jewish district was located by Brother Pankratz and all visitation work centered in this area. New Testaments were placed in the hands and homes of the Jews. House to house visits, visits to their businesses, hospital visitation, mailing of letters to university students and also to all Jews in the city, children's activities, and material help to the poor formed the range of activities for the missionary.

Brother George Konrad took over the work in 1953. In 1954 the Jewish Mission work in Winnipeg was transferred to the Canada Inland Mission of the Canadian Conference to be henceforth known as Gospel Witness to Israel. No workers have been found for this field since 1954.

Thus has ended an era in our Gospel outreach. These missionary efforts were an expression of concern for the lost in urban centers. Today the brotherhood has been led to a new approach to bring the Gospel to others. Through the establishment of churches in urban centers we seek to continue our witness of God's saving grace.

## Home Missions

### United States

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:8-9).

Our concept of home missions has undergone many changes since the early 1900's. In order to fully appreciate the work of our forefathers and to evaluate the work of our present brotherhood we need to review the past, take a realistic view of the work of the present, and seek to evaluate the prospects for home mission work in the years that lie ahead if Christ tarries.

#### *The Home Mission Movement*

The organization of local congregations gained impetus in the mid-1870's so that by 1878 a number of churches gathered to organize into a conference. The youthful Conference met once annually from 1878 through 1909 for the purpose of fellowship and the strengthening of inter-church relationships. Socially the young brotherhood was a stranger in a new land and the total home mission effort was considered to be the strengthening of believers and seeking the conversion of their own children. The language barrier made it almost impossible in the early years to expect an aggressive outreach to the non-German and non-Mennonite neighbors. In the early Conference sessions the brotherhood consistently sought to aid all the churches by offering or

assigning brethren capable of ministering the Word of God for special services known as revival and evangelistic meetings or Bible conferences. Until the Conference at Henderson, Nebraska in 1909 all home mission work was resolved in General Conference sessions. In 1909 the Conference, due to widespread distances effected a territorial division forming three district conferences in the United States. Home Mission work then became a responsibility of each district conference. The work continued to be that of making available ministers of the Word to the churches for evangelistic or revival efforts. Once each triennium a General Conference session reviewed in a general way what was being accomplished in the total brotherhood. The minutes of the various sessions reveal that the bulk of the home mission business consisted of reports of revival meetings, testimonies of the workers, a treasurer's report, statistical data, and general admonitions to fervent intercession.

Most of the home mission preaching was done by those who had been ordained to the ministry of the Word. The names of C. N. Hiebert, F. J. Wiens, M. M. Just, N. N. Hiebert, Johann Foth, G. M. Pankratz, John Regier and a number of others are recorded as the early evangelists.

Concern was often expressed for non-Mennonite people even in these early years. In 1910 the Conference voted to begin an outreach through the city mission work in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

When new congregations were formed on the plains, leading brethren made it their business to supply them with a spiritual ministry. Capable brethren were assigned to minister to new congregations.



gations for periods ranging from one month to over a year until the church became established. Often the congregations met in homes, school buildings, or even out-of-doors. Little expense was involved and local brethren were elected to the ministry to serve nearly always without any salary or financial subsidy.

### *The Contemporary Home Mission Movement*

In the 1930's the bulk of the churches in the United States had established a bilingual type of service. It now became possible for the non-German neighbors to begin to profit from the spiritual life and fervor of the brethren. In rapidly moving socio-economic circumstances the Mennonite Brethren Church was soon to become an integral part of community life far beyond the confines of its own membership. The fervor for outreach in foreign fields was now held up as a challenge to evangelization in the homeland. This manifested itself most aggressively in the Southern District when in 1937 the Conference voted to open a home mission work among the Latin Americans in South Texas. After fervent prayer Brother and Sister Harry Neufeld were commissioned to open a field on the border of Mexico. This work was graciously blessed of God. Today eight Mexican churches exist to the glory of God. To counteract the pressure of the Roman Catholic culture the Conference voted to build the parochial school, *El Faro*, in 1948. Through the years almost 400 believers were baptized upon confession of faith and an average of 145 grammar school children were instructed in *El Faro* each year.

With the expansion of the area in which Gospel work was carried on the budgetary needs constantly increased. Total gifts reported at the Conference of 1937 were \$2,356.07. The 1959 Southern District Conference Yearbook recorded receipts for the year

totaling \$66,994.43 for home missions. In 1946 this Conference entered another field in Arkansas. This later developed into several churches composed of members of non-Mennonite background.

In 1950 the Southern District Conference voted the organization of an Evangelism Committee which was to serve in the area of new church organization. This was later merged with the Committee of Home Missions. Within eight years eleven new churches have been organized, most of these in larger cities. The objective of these churches is to reach the lost and to provide a church home for Mennonite Brethren people who have moved into the cities. A special Church Builders' Fund was established to aid new churches with an outright grant to assist in the building of the first church home. This has been blessed of God.

Similar advancement can be cited in the other districts. In the Central District Conference new interest in outreach was manifesting itself. It found expression in the establishment of a mission project among the Indians of the South Dakota Reservation. Two mission stations exist as Pine Ridge and Porcupine. New churches have also been established at a number of places.

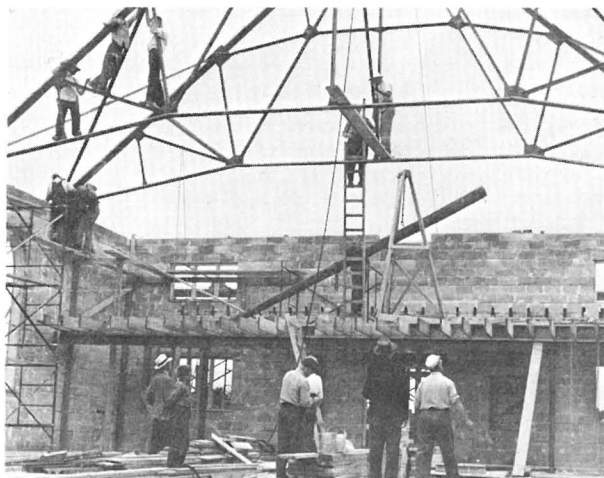
In the Pacific District the work of home missions has taken on a different form in its general outreach. Although the District had its own city mission, known as the City Terrace Mission in Los Angeles, for many years the main emphasis in home mission was to encourage local churches to conduct vacation Bible schools, released-time religious education classes, His Jewels classes among the children of the neighborhood, and special meetings for transients and at road camps. After several decades the City Terrace Mission became an indigenous church. Through the years the Pacific District Conference has subsidized small groups of believers to help them organize new cell groups. A District Endowment Fund has been established to make possible this assistance and special personnel has been set aside in both the Pacific and Southern Districts to assist in the organizational work of these new churches.

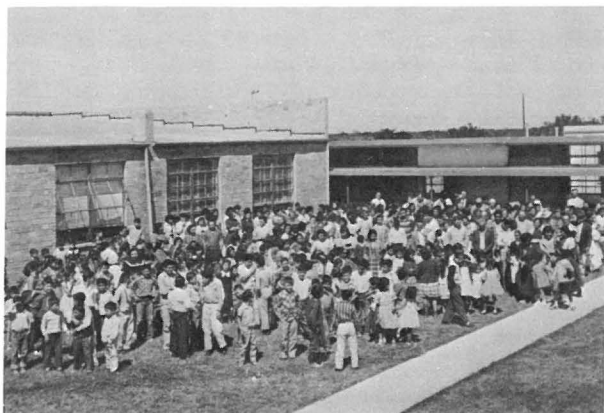
Some of the newer churches organized in recent years in the United States are located in Denver, Colorado; Burlington, Colorado; Garden City, Kansas; Newton, Kansas; Topeka, Kansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Weatherford, Oklahoma; Siloam Springs, Arkansas; Seattle, Washington, a second church at Santa Clara, California, several churches in Fresno, California; Pacoima (suburb of Los Angeles), California; Wasco, California; Minot, North Dakota; Wolf Point, Montana; and Lincoln, Nebraska.

### *Philosophy of Home Missions*

In order to evaluate fairly the trend of home missions in the United States several observations are pertinent:

Growing congregations lead to church construction.





Christian schools are a rewarding form of home mission outreach.



Urbanization has led to the construction of churches in new centers.

1. The Great Commission of our Lord applies not only to Gospel work in lands far removed but also to our adjacent communities.

2. Previously our people were an agrarian people mainly interested in preserving their own cultural and social standards. The lack of new physical frontiers has forced the youth to find a place of occupation in the suburbs and cities. One-third of the American population is now residing in suburbs. The building of new churches is not as simple as it was fifty years ago. Social and economic pressures with strict city building codes demand an outlay of vast sums of money.

3. An almost isolationistic theory of existence has given way to a practical application of the words, "Ye are in the world, but not of the world," implicating our own brotherhood in an unprecedented evangelistic challenge.

4. A large percentage of our people who have moved into the cities were forced to find new church homes. Many of these church homes were not clearly evangelical. Today our home mission philosophy must envision both a strong church doctrine and ethic to squarely meet the need of an urbanizing people and to challenge the evangelical world to more aggressive soul winning. The home mission challenge is complex in that it must cope with social changes.

As we glance at the past we say with the Apostle Paul, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). It is Christ who builds and maintains His church. However, He uses men and women to do this. If we as a brotherhood are to be free of the blood of a lost contemporary generation we must allow Christ to use us. The power of the Holy Spirit within us makes it possible for Christ to do His work through us, to open many new churches in the many population centers.

Our Biblical ethic and doctrine need not be com-

promised. Our tendency toward a social and cultural isolationism in our relationship to people of a non-Mennonite background and culture must give way to a recognition of truth that "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." This means that we must emphasize the Great Commission honestly in all of its phases, educate and prepare our brotherhood for the possible though difficult task, and expectantly beseech God to work His work through us.

## Canada

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Among the many tasks committed to the Mennonite Brethren Church is the task of presenting the Gospel to the people who live near its members. That is the work of home missions. How the Mennonite Brethren Church has entered upon this task in Canada—in the many areas comparable to Judea and Samaria—is the subject of this account. Many communities in this land of refuge and opportunity have been evangelized, but many others still remain to be entered.

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada had a unique beginning in that the first churches organized were the result of home mission work initiated by the first North American Mennonite Brethren Conference which convened at Henderson, Nebraska, in 1879. The Brethren Heinrich Voth and David Dyck were sent to labor among the newly-settled Mennonites of Southern Manitoba. As a result Elder Heinrich Voth baptized the first converts at Burwalde in 1886. Those who were baptized during the period of revival organized three congrega-

tions: the largest at Winkler, another at Kronsgart, and a third near Plum Coulee.

Between 1892 and 1910 a dozen congregations were formed in Saskatchewan when Mennonite Brethren families moved there from the United States. Their churches, organized into district conferences named after the communities of Rosthern and Herbert, formed the Northern District Conference in 1910. They were joined by the Manitoba congregations in 1913.

For the next three decades the home mission activities were restricted primarily to evangelization by conference-appointed brethren and to city mission work in Winnipeg and Saskatoon. Foremost among these evangelists and colporteurs was Brother C. N. Hiebert and first among the city missionaries was Brother W. J. Bestvater beginning in Winnipeg's North End in 1913. Sister Anna Thiesen, who will be remembered for the founding of the Mary-Martha Home (1925), began her work in Winnipeg in 1916. The Brethren E. H. Nickel (1920-25) and C. N. Hiebert (1925-1940) succeeded Bestvater as city missionaries in conjunction with the North End M. B. Church. A similar work was begun in Saskatoon in 1933. Brother H. S. Rempel served as city missionary from 1935 to 1950, first under the Northern District Conference, then after 1939, when all the city mission projects were made a provincial matter, under the Saskatchewan Conference.

A second large group of Mennonite Brethren arrived and settled in Canada between 1923 and 1930. Their main activities at first centered around the spiritual needs of the new congregations which they organized. The most prominent methods of edification (*Gemeindebau*) were evangelistic meetings, Bible discussion conferences, Christian Endeavor programs (*Jugendvereine*), and choir work. It was through the founding of the Bible schools at Winkler, Manitoba and Hepburn, Saskatchewan that young people caught the vision for home mission work as it is thought of today. A great desire was awakened to take the Gospel message to the unconverted in Canadian communities. As time went on the following home mission activities were introduced: the summer Bible school, extension Sunday schools, stationing of missionary couples in promising fields, colportage work, and finally the radio ministry. These avenues of witnessing in rural and urban areas came to be considered as comparable to foreign mission work, whereas all other activities within the local congregations were called *Gemeindebau* (building up of the local churches).

Through the Bethany Bible School the Western Children's Mission was organized in 1935 under the guidance of Brother J. B. Toews followed by Brother G. W. Peters. This Mission, first in the field of summer Bible school work (DVBS) and stationing of home missionaries in rural areas, maintained an inter-denominational position until 1953. Nevertheless, it early received its support in finances and

workers from the Mennonite Brethren churches of Saskatchewan. Later, in 1939, the idea of such mission work was transplanted—in its motive and method—to the Province of British Columbia. The idea took root there and was developed by this Conference as its own home mission arm in 1945 under the name West Coast Children's Mission. In Manitoba the Winkler Bible School sent out students into summer Bible school work for the first time in 1936. This effort to win children to Christ through the medium of the summer Bible school was the pioneer home mission activity of the young people of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada.

Before we describe how the various provincial conferences have channeled the energies of their young people into home mission activities, a word must be said of the attempt to centralize all these efforts within the framework of the Canadian Conference under the Canada Inland Mission. Although the suggestion for this Mission was accepted as early as 1944, it was not until 1949 that it took full responsibility for a definite area of home missions. At that time the work among the Russian people at Arelee, Saskatchewan and Grand Forks, British Columbia came under the jurisdiction of the Canada Inland Mission. Somewhat later the work among the Indians and Japanese at Port Edward, British Columbia and among the Jews of Winnipeg were also made Canadian Conference projects. By 1958, however, because of a process of decentralizing all home mission work and making it the sole responsibility of the provincial Conferences, the Canada Inland Mission retained only two main functions: to recommend to the Canadian Conference the financial support of its former stations and to seek out new fields such as in Quebec.

Soon after World War II the provincial Conferences mobilized their peace-time resources for home mission work. In Saskatchewan the Western Children's Mission, adapted as the agency of the Saskatchewan Conference in 1953, changed its name to that of the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan. In addition to an annual summer Bible school program the Mission has established mission stations at Swift Current, Lucky Lake, Foam Lake, Warman, Hague Ferry, Mildred, Pierceland, and Compass. It assumed responsibility for the Saskatoon City Mission and later, in 1957, began a new work, a Mennonite Brethren Church from the outset, at Carrot River. Since 1953 the groups of believers at the mission in Saskatoon and Warman have been organized as churches. The Saskatchewan brethren have also sponsored two Bible camps, Westbank and Redberry.

In Manitoba Brother W. Falk expanded the city mission work in Winnipeg after 1940 by the deployment of many city young people, and, after 1944, of the students of the Bible College. An old church building was purchased on Logan Avenue to serve as the spiritual home of the converts and as the center of the children's work. After Brother John M.



Schmidt had succeeded W. Falk as missionary this work of many difficult years culminated in the organization of the Gospel Light Mennonite Brethren Church. During 1959 this congregation moved to the suburb of Fort Rouge while Logan Avenue church building remained the center of the city mission work and continued to be served by an additional full-time worker.

For the past two years Brother John Schmidt has devoted his full time to the Gospel Light Hour Radio ministry. This radio program initiated by the students of the Bible College in 1946 now has a studio in Elmwood and produces broadcasts for an international audience in three languages. Its annual budget is about \$27,000.

In Manitoba's *Randmission* all the home mission stations excepting one were founded after World War II. The exception was Lindal where a work began in 1935. Until 1957 there were resident workers at Lindal, Ashern, Winnipegosis, Horndean and Carman. Since then the workers have been withdrawn from Ashern and Lindal. City missions have been inaugurated in Brandon and Portage la Prairie. Two Bible camps for children, one at Arnes on Lake Winnipeg, and the other at Burwalde, have been sponsored by Mennonite Brethren boards of directors. During 1957 the Manitoba Conference approved the merging of its city and rural mission committees. Strictly rural points in recent years have been best served on a circuit after the pattern of frontier missionaries.

After World War II the summer Bible school was transplanted to Alberta as well. Since then Mennonite Brethren young people have conducted vacation Bible schools at about fifteen localities each summer. The congregations at Gem and Coaldale have served extension Sunday schools for the past ten years. By far the greatest home mission effort has been concentrated in the city of Calgary. Brother J. A. Froese was called to begin a work there in March, 1953. As greater numbers of Mennonite Brethren members moved to this city a church was organized. Since 1957 the city mission work has been carried on by Brother Henry G. Thielmann.

As Mennonite Brethren members from the prairies migrated to British Columbia, a city mission was begun in Vancouver in 1936. Brother Jacob Thiessen served as missionary for a number of years. Out of the work as organized by Brother H. G. Claassen, who has served since 1950, there has developed the Pacific Grace Mission, a chapel which enrolls up to 300 children in its Sunday school, and has a growing adult congregation and conducts the rescue efforts on skid row.

The mission work in the Fraser Valley and other areas had its small-scale beginning in 1938-39. While the provincial Conference supported a *Randmission* to Mennonite families scattered beyond the organized congregations, other brethren brought the idea of the Western Children's Mission to the pro-



Singing the Gospel into human hearts via radio.

vince. In 1945 the latter plan of mission work was adopted by the British Columbia Conference and renamed the West Coast Children's Mission. Since then the Lord has given the increase to the extent that in 1958 the Mission engaged twelve couples full time on as many fields, a full-time field director and an office secretary who maintains follow-up work with the many children registered during the summer months in the vacation Bible school work. During the summer of 1959 Mennonite Brethren young people in British Columbia spent more than two hundred two-week periods in teaching over 3,000 children the Gospel.

Because of the summer Bible schools there developed a need to establish Sunday schools. Since 1945 many British Columbia churches have taken the responsibility of serving one or more of these outlying communities through their Sunday school committees. Wherever these have shown prospects of growth, the churches have constructed chapels and in some cases have asked the West Coast Children's Mission to provide full-time workers. At present there are resident workers at Harrison Hot Springs, McConnell Creek and Otter Road in the Fraser Valley; at Ocean Falls and Port Edward (Canada Inland Mission) on the West Coast; at Kitimat, Terrace and Vanderhoof in the north; at Oliver and Grand Forks (Canada Inland Mission) in the southeast. Two others, County Line and Queensborough, have become Mennonite Brethren churches. Through "colonization evangelism" at Hazelton (1949) and Dawson Creek (1960) and the established pattern of home mission activity, new fields are opening in the Fraser Valley, the Caribou country and in the Northland.

Some Vineland brethren organized the first summer vacation Bible school for an outlying area in Ontario in 1944. Interest and support grew rapidly

so that ten years later as many as 1,500 children were being enrolled annually. The first rural mission station was opened at Hampshire near Orillia by Brother H. H. Dick in 1949. In subsequent years missions were opened in Hamilton and Toronto (Willowdale). The latter has been receiving some Canada Inland Mission support. In Hamilton a basement chapel was constructed in 1958. A fourth mission, which had been conducted as an extension Sunday school of the Virgil Mennonite Brethren Church since 1951, was organized as the Niagara Mennonite Brethren Church in 1957. Since 1953 the campus of Eden Christian College has served as the location for an annual conference-sponsored children's Bible camp.

The aims of the missionary activities in Canada have been to bring the unconverted to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to lead groups of believers into an understanding of the church, and to guide such groups into full integration with the Mennonite Brethren Conference. Many hindrances have been overcome since the beginning of home mission work in Canada. Many others remain to

be overcome. Chief of these is the difficulty of integrating believers of non-Mennonite religious background. At present an attempt is being made to write a unified constitution for the incorporation of groups of believers, which have been gathered through the efforts of our members.

In spite of many difficulties much has been achieved to the glory of God. Thousands of children in unchurched communities have been instructed through summer Bible schools. Adults have heard the message proclaimed and have seen it lived by Mennonite Brethren missionaries and witnesses. Eight or nine mission groups have been organized as churches in the last five years. About twenty-five chapels have been constructed, largely by voluntary labor, as witnesses to a saving Christ. During 1958-59 the five provincial conferences in Canada together had a budget of around \$200,000 for their summer Bible school work, for the support of forty full-time workers, for camp work and the twenty radio broadcasts which are aired weekly.

Truly it may be said, "The Word of God grew and was multiplied" (Acts 12:24).

## Evangelism

Evangelism played a dominant role in the founding of our brotherhood. The evangelistic ministry of Pastor Eduard Wuest reached far beyond the confines of his own parish into the Mennonite villages of South Russia and prepared the spiritual field in which the Mennonite Brethren Church came into life. His evangelistic ministry became not only the means of salvation for many, but also the pattern of spiritual work and preaching for the founding brethren. Wuest provided a strong impetus to the spirit of evangelism which came to the Mennonites in Russia about the middle of the 19th century through German Baptists, Pietists, Moravian Brethren and English Plymouth Brethren. Our founding brethren inherited this evangelistic spirit and naturally perpetuated it more than did the main body of Russian Mennonites.

The first recorded evangelistic outreach to the Russian people by one of our brethren was that of Johann J. Wieler (1839?-1899). Converted at an early age he joined the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860. He was soon called to the ministry of the Word and became active in evangelistic efforts among the Russians. He proposed to the Mennonite

Brethren Conference that it officially assume the evangelism of the Russians as its mission, in the face of legal restrictions. The Conference being unable to accept this, Wieler turned to help Russian Baptists. His evangelistic activities attracted the notice of the police, and when he went so far as to baptize a Russian woman convert the police felt constrained to apprehend him and his family for banishment to Siberia. He escaped to Berlin with his family, and thence to Rumania where he developed the work of a Russian Baptist church. There he came to an accidental death in helping in the construction of a new church for the expanding work. He is thus the first of our brethren who suffered exile for the sake of his faith and had to end his life in banishment.

Other evangelists who were very active in a ministry to the Russians were Adolf A. Reimer, Heinrich P. Sukkau, and Heinrich J. Enns. Their work covers a period beginning a decade or so before World War I and continuing through the years of famine in the early twenties.

In 1905 the Mennonite Brethren Conference began a mission to the Russians. A fund was estab-

lished with Brother G. P. Froese as treasurer. Native Russian evangelists were appointed and supported out of this fund. The mission was called simply "Evangelization." Later due to government opposition the project was stopped, but the same work continued privately, a somewhat dangerous procedure. The treasurer of this secret fund was J. P. Isaak. The publishing house "Raduga" at Halbstadt promoted evangelistic efforts among the Russians by the publication of evangelistic and devotional literature in the Russian language. Beginning in 1914 the Mariental M. B. Church in Alt-Samara sponsored an evangelistic outreach to the Russian people of its surroundings.

A vigorous Gospel crusade to the Russians was the work of the *Zeltmission* (tent evangelism) under the leadership of Brother Jacob J. Dyck (1890-1919). While serving as an army Red Cross worker in Moscow in 1917 Dyck joined a Christian soldiers' association, composed mostly of Mennonites. This association was very active in the city in doing personal work and distributing tracts. It was able to acquire five Red Cross tents, and a number of the members started tent evangelism among the native population of Central Russia. Later a call was made for additional workers. Twelve men and twelve women responded to this call. In June, 1919, in a public service in the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren Church these workers were consecrated to the task of tent evangelism. Tragically, in October of the same year, five of this group, including Brother Dyck, were murdered in the village Dubovka-Eichenfeld by the Machno bandits.

A very able itinerating preacher, also to the Russians, was Brother Jacob Kroeker (1872-1948). He was co-founder of Raduga, a publishing house in Neu-Halbstadt which produced Russian tracts and distributed Russian Bibles. In 1918 Kroeker helped in founding the mission known as *Licht im Osten*, the purpose of which was to educate Russian preachers in Wernigerode. After completion of this training these were then to labor among their own people.

Thus the closing years of our Conference in Russia were marked by heroic attempts to evangelize the Russian neighbors of our people. Though there was much fruit in evidence even then, the blessing we believe continues in the U. S. S. R. today, and the final rewards will be known in eternity alone.

#### *Early Evangelism in America to 1909*

The brethren who founded our early churches in America also carried out the first evangelistic ministry in these churches. In this ministry they were known as *Reiseprediger*, itinerant preachers, who traveled extensively, visiting the churches, especially during the winter months. These older brethren were gifted as Bible expositors and had the welfare of the churches at heart. Their ministry included Bible-study meetings (*Bibelstunden*), and

preaching services. Their messages were aimed mainly at the nurture and instruction of the church members, but often the Gospel bore fruit in salvation of souls.

Elder Abram Schellenberg of Buhler, Kansas was a gifted speaker and spiritually endowed for the ministry. His hearers were deeply impressed that God was speaking through His servant. Elder David Dyck began his ministry in Russia as a young man, then in the United States, Manitoba, and finally at Waldheim, Saskatchewan. Brother Dyck's deep thinking reflected in his sermons which were earnest and wholesome. Elder Heinrich Voth of Minnesota, and later of Manitoba, was quick to notice lost souls. He was an effective revival preacher and a sympathetic spiritual counsellor. The early work of evangelism was further done by the elders Johann Foth, Cornelius Wedel, Johann J. Regier, and Heinrich Adrian.

These older brethren were followed by younger evangelists who conducted series of prolonged evangelistic meetings in the churches, schoolhouses, and other places where doors opened. These meetings were aimed toward leading the unsaved to an acceptance of Christ. This evangelistic effort was definitely blessed of the Lord and frequently led to a revival within a church and to the conversion of many of the unsaved. In many cases large baptisms followed, through which the membership of the churches increased rapidly.

Among the earlier Conference evangelists who devoted themselves fully to this work for a number of years and whom the Lord used in this ministry in a special way were the following: John Harms, who traveled extensively and held successful meetings; P. H. Wedel, a gifted evangelist with good training, who conducted many large revivals from 1892 to 1894; and D. D. Bartel, who was largely used in the churches located farthest south. A little later several other brethren entered this work and did a blessed service over a period of many years. P. P. Rempel and J. S. Regier were effective in the work. H. S. Voth was a successful and much used evangelist for a long time. C. N. Hiebert, who is still active, entered the field of evangelism toward the close of this period.

Some brethren were successful evangelists for some time, and then entered the field of foreign missions under the Conference: J. H. Pankratze, D. F. Bergthold, F. J. Wiens, J. H. Voth, and F. A. Janzen. Another group did the work of evangelists in their earlier years, and then served the church in the field of education: H. W. Lohrenz, P. C. Hiebert and H. F. Toews.

#### *Evangelism from 1910-1950*

Evangelism in the churches, that is, the holding of prolonged evangelistic meetings in all the congregations, has been the main type of home mission work of the Conference. At the Conference the



evangelists were appointed and a plan for their itinerary was made. The Home Missions Committee directed this work during the year. Among those evangelists who have done more extensive work in the earlier years are the brethren J. S. Regier, J. H. Ewert, H. F. Klassen, H. A. Neufeld, H. S. Voth, W. J. Bestvater, Adam Ross, J. J. Franz, C. N. Hiebert, B. F. Wiens, D. F. Strauss, P. E. Penner, J. F. Thiessen, H. D. Wiebe, H. H. Stobbe, J. J. Wiebe.

A little later other evangelists entered the field of service and have been active in the Conference. Among these are D. Hooge, J. H. Lohrenz, P. V. Balzer, J. A. Wiebe, J. N. C. Hiebert, E. Roloff, J. K. Siemens, G. H. Jantzen, R. C. Seibel, J. B. Siemens, Sam Hiebert, H. S. Rempel, P. R. Lange, Harry Neufeld, J. B. Toews. Some of these men have devoted themselves to such work for many years, but in later years have turned to other work.

### *Recent Developments*

In the period beginning with World War II and the following years certain factors in the field of evangelism made it imperative that the churches and district conferences give some careful thought to this much needed work. First, it was apparent that there were fewer evangelists among our brethren. This was not because there were no brethren among us with this gift, or none upon whose heart God had laid this burden for an evangelistic ministry to lost souls. Rather, it was an established fact that God had through the years proffered as a gift to His church brethren with evangelistic gifts and zeal, but in many instances after brief periods of evangelistic ministry among us they had turned to other fields—the foreign mission field, teaching in our schools, or later, pastorates in our churches. The churches were reluctant to release their pastors for evangelistic services.

Into this situation another complicating factor entered. Many of our congregations felt insistently that evangelistic work among them must be done because their children, growing up and going out into life, were still not saved. At the same time, partly in answer to such a demand, numbers of evangelists from other backgrounds began to work, and found open doors into our churches. In many instances their ministry was wholesome, and owned of God in the salvation of souls.

### *In the United States*

At the 1954 General Conference in Hillsboro the delegates from the United States elected a three-man Board for Evangelism. In 1956 this Board appointed Brother Waldo Wiebe as a full-time evangelist. At the first United States Area Conference, held in Reedley in 1957, the membership of the Board for Evangelism was increased to six. This

Board sponsors a very full annual schedule of evangelistic services in the churches. There is a greater demand for an evangelistic ministry than one brother can meet. Part of this need is met by some brethren who are pastors of churches. The Lord has signally blessed this program. Souls have been saved and Christians revived.

### *In Canada*

Motivated by needs and considerations similar to those in the United States, the brethren J. J. Toews and I. H. Tiessen drew up a list of suggestions and presented them to the 1958 Canadian Conference session. In essence these suggestions held that some board of authority be created in the Conference that would provide for, regulate, and coordinate the work of evangelism in our churches. In response to this a Committee on Evangelism was created with J. J. Toews as chairman.

This committee conducted a study and submitted it to the Committee of Reference and Counsel. After review, the latter committee sent it to the churches for consideration. The 1959 Conference accepted in principle the appointment of an evangelist, and with it a complete program of evangelism. The Conference pledged support in prayer. Brother H. H. Epp, formerly pastor of the Blaine, Washington Church, was appointed as Canadian Conference evangelist to serve the churches and schools.

To complete the record it need only be mentioned that there have been and still are other brethren who are active in evangelism on a part-time basis: J. J. Toews, J. A. Toews, J. G. Baerg, P. R. Toews, J. H. Epp, F. C. Peters, and A. P. Regier.

Some brethren from both United States and Canada have also gone to South American churches for an evangelistic ministry: J. A. Toews, G. W. Peters, B. J. Braun, J. B. Toews, C. N. Hiebert.

As a brotherhood we should reflect on the fact that we have embarked upon a new program of evangelism in our churches through the appointment of full-time evangelists. We should keep in mind that this new approach has followed closely upon another trend in our Conference, the emergence of the pastoral system. The two developments are, no doubt, basically related. As we will be faithful and act responsibly in relation to our Conference-wide evangelism programs God will, we trust and pray, be pleased to add His blessing by saving souls and adding to the church. But we must remember that we cannot with immunity evade our Christian responsibility individually and as churches to be witnesses and soul winners. The danger lies very close to shift our personal responsibility onto the evangelist or the committee for evangelism. May the Lord spare us from the fallacy of thinking that the improved methods of propagating the Gospel absolve us of individual or corporate responsibility in carrying out the Great Commission.

# Our Youth

According to historian P. M. Friesen the Mennonite Brethren churches in Russia provided for the education of their young people by establishing schools. In the churches less attention was given directly to the social-ethical life of youth. These areas of life received consideration through the training in elementary and secondary schools, Sunday school, and the general worship services. *Jugendvereine* were organized, separately for young men and for young women, but they usually grew out of the spiritual concern of individuals for the young people. A deeply spiritual atmosphere in the home was the fruitful soil in which spiritual values were nurtured and implanted into the lives of young people.

The Bible school at Tchongraw in the Crimea, founded in 1918, was the only institution directly concerned with arousing in young people an interest in missions and evangelism. Much credit for this goes to the founder, missionary John G. Wiens. Definite attempts were made to translate this spirit of missions and evangelism into action. When this was done, however, some of the young men personally experienced the restrictions placed upon our Mennonite people in Russia not to evangelize their Russian neighbors. The brethren Abraham H. Unruh and Gerhard Froese suffered imprisonment on such a charge. The times and circumstances were such that a spirit of missions and evangelism never developed to a point where it captivated large numbers of the younger generation.

In America the situation was vastly different. Complete freedom to worship, to evangelize, and to promote religious education awakened in the first immigrants the desire to make use of this freedom in building up church life and fostering the spiritual life of young people. At first narrow viewpoints in regard to youth work had to be overcome, but it was not long before the organization of *Jugendvereine* (Christian Endeavors) took place.

On the local level, in the churches, this institution of Christian Endeavor was for those times and circumstances a very apt and adequate expression of youth work. It served an admirable purpose in providing a common experience of Christian fellowship and service for both old and young Christians. In these services old and young joined in testimo-

nies, Bible reading and song. They saw and heard each other sing and pray and testify. Often individuals came to a saving knowledge of Christ through this form of youth work. Christian Endeavor was an integrating factor in the spiritual life of our churches. There is nothing like it in many of our churches today. Later these *Jugendvereine* were organized along constitutional lines with a specific membership. The full measure of spiritual fruit resulting from Christian Endeavor in our early history will be known only in eternity.

The first evidence of organization for youth work on a conference level appears to have been in a Young People's Union Committee, which was organized in 1933, and which in 1934 produced several quarterly leaflets of study helps for young people's organizations in the churches. The Youth Committee of the General Conference came into being in 1936. In 1937 this committee began *The Christian Leader*, a periodical in the English language dedicated to the interests of young people, with Brother P. H. Berg as editor. This publication continued under the jurisdiction of the Youth Committee until the 1951 General Conference sessions, when it became the official English organ of the Conference.

In its work the Youth Committee sponsored Christian Fellowship organizations in the churches, promoted youth camps and other young people's activities. In the summer of 1949 Brother J. W. Vogt was appointed to travel to the various churches and to the Pacific, Southern and Central District Youth Bible Camps as speaker and as representative of the Youth Committee. Brother Vogt also took over the editorship of *The Christian Leader*. In 1951 the Youth Committee reported that each district now had a district-wide committee and many of the churches were holding youth fellowship meetings at a regular time on Sunday evenings or during the week as well as conducting Christian Endeavor meetings. In the fellowship meetings emphasis was placed on a balanced program of study, worship, service and recreation.

With the strong development of youth work on the local and district level the General Conference Youth Committee gradually ceased to function as a working committee. Reflecting this situation our

Revised Constitution of 1954 states: "The Youth Committee shall serve as a consultative and advisory body . . . The General Conference looks to the District Conferences for the implementation, promotion and direction of the youth work and the youth organizations within their areas."

Two booklets were published by the Youth Committee, "Your Church and You," by F. C. Peters, and "What I Owe" by C. E. Fast. Since 1954, then, our youth work has rested almost solely with the districts.

In the Southern District youth work on the district level began with a camping program about twenty years ago. At first the attendance comprised only young people, but during the last few years the camping program has been expanded to serve all age levels from fourth graders to family heads, at family camps. Various localities have been used as camp grounds. In this year camps were held at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and Palmer Lake, Colorado.

In conjunction with the annual Conference the Southern District Christian Fellowship holds its annual youth conferences. For many years the Saturday afternoon session was devoted to the interests of youth, followed in the evening with an inspirational rally directed to youth. This year the youth conference was in the form of a banquet. The officers present their reports and annual business is conducted. The meeting elects two members to the Conference Youth Committee. The budget covers two items: a number of scholarships for attendance in church and conference related schools, and costs of administration. During the year the Committee maintains contact with young people in local churches through the medium of newsletters and bulletins.

The youth work in local churches includes all or some of the following aspects, depending on congregation size and local needs. A local Christian Fellowship organization conducts a regular program of services to young people of various age levels. In many churches these are held as an adjunct to the regular Sunday evening services. In midweek services there is usually a Bible study class for young people, sometimes administered by the local C. F. organization. All church youth organizations sponsor a program of social and recreational activities which is adapted to the seasons, and attempts to meet the needs in these areas of life. Many young people of local churches have opportunities for participation in programs of outreach with the Gospel in surrounding communities.

The Central District has a youth committee composed of three adults, whose main function is to make plans for and then supervise the annual youth camp for high school and college young people. This camp program has been in operation since 1949. This year the camp was held at Lake Metigoshe, North Dakota. The Committee also encourages young people in the various churches of the District to participate in the Quiz Time. This is

carried out in the individual churches during the year, and then the teams are pitted against each other at camp.

Each local church has its program of youth work. Some of the churches which are closer together often unite for short youth conferences, but these are not district sponsored.

Another part of the youth work is the youth rally held on the Sunday afternoon of the District Conference. However, only the youth of the surrounding area are in attendance; there are no youth delegates to the Conference. The youth rally serves to unite the young people with the larger fellowship of the Conference.

In the Pacific District the camping program has been developed perhaps more fully than in the other districts. The Pacific District Conference elects the Camping Committee, separate and distinct from the Youth Committee, to assume full responsibility for the camping program with its spiritual ministry.

The setting for this camping program is the Hartland Bible Camp, located in the Sierra Nevada mountains, east of Fresno, California. It is owned, maintained, and developed by a group of Mennonite Brethren men who have a burden for such a ministry. They are known as the Hartland Association and as such have complete charge of grounds and facilities.

In each church a camp representative is responsible for registering campers and enlisting teachers and counselors. The Camping Committee employs a camp coordinator on a part-time basis, who is a liaison between the Committee and the Association and who supervises the entire program. The Bible camp program has proved to be very effective in fostering spiritual life and growth.

A Youth Committee of seven members represents youth work at the sessions of the Pacific District Conference. This committee has set up specific objectives in youth work relative to the spiritual needs of young people and to the organization of youth work on the local church and district levels. The committee has sponsored helpful leadership clinics for youth workers of local churches. The committee arranges for a youth convention held in conjunction with the annual district conference sessions. At this convention there is a good representation of young people and their committees from the churches of the Pacific District. Thus the convention serves admirably to integrate youth work in the District and gives promise of further development.

#### *United States Conference Youth Work*

At the first United States Area Conference held at Reedley, California in 1957 it was generally conceived that the youth leaders of the three districts together with the executive secretary of the General Conference Youth committee comprise the



youth committee for the initial purposes of the convention. At this convention a delegate at large was elected to serve on the area committee together with district representation.

The second area convention at Fairview, Oklahoma heard the progress report with more clearly defined objectives. The advisory status of the Committee was supplemented by giving it prerogatives of an operating board. Elections included a member at large elected by the area delegation, and a representative of each of the three districts.

The third area convention held at Henderson, Nebraska in 1959, upon recommendation by the Committee, again modified the organization of the Committee to consist of five members elected by the area convention, one from each of the three districts and two at large.

Also upon recommendation, the committee was instructed to call an exploratory meeting before the next sessions in order to determine more accurately the areas of work and feasible plans of implementing this work. The instructions included investigating the feasibility of employing a youth work coordinator. This meeting has been held; report and recommendations will be given at the fourth area convention at Shafter November 10-11, 1960.

At present the Committee holds in readiness recommendations to the area convention regarding publication of materials and employment of a youth work coordinator. Action on these will determine the realization of the program as conceived by the Committee to achieve its objectives.

### Canada

In Canada youth work during the early years of the first churches in Manitoba and Saskatchewan

followed the pattern set in the American churches. This is understandable since the formation of churches in Manitoba resulted from the evangelistic outreach of the brethren in the United States, and the first churches in Saskatchewan were organized by American brethren who emigrated to that province.

Churches were organized in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia as a result of the influx of Mennonite Brethren from Russia after World War I. In some of these churches the *Jugendvereine* were never firmly established as an institution of youth work. Where *Jugendvereine* were organized these approximated the spirit and character of their predecessors. In the meantime many changes were in the air, the world was preparing for World War II, and in the churches it became apparent that a new pattern of youth work must develop in order that Christian young people might be strengthened spiritually for the many difficulties they would meet in a changing world.

The strain of a world at war was felt in the churches too, and little progress in youth work was possible. It was a matter of trying to maintain youth work in the face of the disruptions caused by the war; young men were away in camps as conscientious objectors; many people at home were given more to making use of material advantages presented by an expanding war economy.

Following World War II the leading brethren of the churches realized that our young people were to a large extent ignorant of our distinctive doctrines. Without needed teaching they might soon be lost to us. Out of this need, and in order to meet the changing trends the 1944 Canadian Conference elected a Youth Committee with Brother H. F. Klassen as chairman. Stated aims of this committee were the salvation of all youth, the deepening of their spiritual life, and leading them into Chris-

Quiz Time is preceded by diligent study of the Bible.



Camping has developed as an effective form of youth work.





Spiritual needs and problems are met in counseling sessions at camp.

tian work in homes, churches, and abroad. In 1945 this committee took over the publication of the *Konferenz-Jugendblatt*, formerly a publication of the Manitoba Youth Committee. This was published until 1957.

The Youth Committee launched its first mission project in 1947, assigning \$480 for youth work in South America. For the year 1960-61 the budget for this missions project is \$6,100 to be used for the support of foreign students in the Bible College, Bethany Bible School in India, radio work in Quito, Ecuador; Japan; and a Russian language broadcast in Canada.

An early publication of the Youth Committee was the translation of "Fundamentals of Faith" from the English language into the German. The joint work of F. C. Peters and A. H. Unruh "Why I Should Be a Church Member" appeared in 1952. *The Youth Worker*, edited by Walter and Katie Wiebe, was first issued in 1952. Appearing ten times a year, it aims to lend a helping hand to the youth work on the local level. *Youth Worker Program Helps* appeared in 1960. Plans have been implemented for the writing of a *Mennonite Brethren Youth Fellowship Handbook* to be published in 1962.

In the provincial conferences Manitoba was one of the first to elect a youth committee. This step was taken in 1943, with Brother H. F. Klassen as chairman. This committee sponsors annually a two-to-three-day youth Bible conference and also a youth workers' conference. The earlier youth workers' conferences included Sunday school matters and *Gesangessache* (promotion of singing and music in churches), each of which are now taken care of separately. A two-day rally with emphasis on missions, particularly home missions, is also held annually. The Committee sponsors its own mission projects as well as supporting the mission pro-

jects of the Canadian Youth Committee. Funds have also been contributed to the partial support of students at the Bible College and Pniel Bible School, Winkler, Manitoba and to the Gospel Light Hour radio work. The annual mission budget is from \$1,700 to \$2,000 and the operating budget about \$450.

The Manitoba Youth Committee pioneered in publications with the Manitoba *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* in 1944. A book of plays, *Gespraeche fuer Jugendvereine*, edited by H. Regehr, was printed in 1954. The Lake Winnipeg Mission Camp and Burwalde Camp offer summer camping opportunities to many young people. Youth work has greatly benefited through assistance given by students of Pniel Bible School and the Bible College.

In Saskatchewan where some of our older churches are located, youth work has taken a somewhat different turn. The three Bible schools situated at Hepburn, Dalmeny and Herbert for many years provided the leadership in youth work by holding youth rallies, missionary conferences and by providing for a Bible-centered education for large numbers of the youth of the area. The Western Children's Mission (now M. B. Mission of Saskatchewan) provided the outlets for service in their extensive program of DVBS, camp work, and evangelism. Christian Endeavor was a strong, spiritual influence in the lives of young people for many years. The establishment of youth fellowship groups in the rural areas has been slow because of the ex-

Christian young people studying and working in the church today build a strong church for tomorrow.



tremes of weather, poor roads, and long distances to church. Within recent years this pattern has been changing so that now nearly all churches have youth fellowship groups.

The Saskatchewan Youth Committee sponsors annual youth rallies, camp retreats on the local and district level, and an annual youth workers' conference.

For many years the annual youth rallies in Ontario on the provincial basis were sponsored by the Ontario Sunday School Committee. In 1950 the Ontario M. B. Youth Committee was organized. While Christian Endeavor programs were held in the early years, the shift in emphasis within the last few years has led to youth fellowship meetings in the midweek services. As in the other provinces the Ontario Youth Committee sponsors annual youth rallies and youth workers' conferences. Some churches conduct week-end retreats. There is no large summer camp program for youth because no suitable camp ground has as yet been acquired.

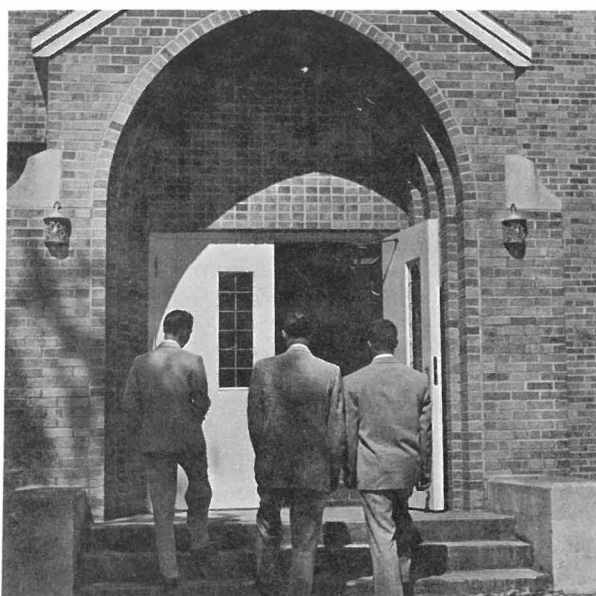
In recent years deeper life services in each local church have been held. Most of the churches in the Ontario Conference also have organized young married people's fellowships. The Committee sponsors an education fund of \$600 annually to assist needy students attending Eden Christian College and the M. B. Bible School of Ontario. "This Way," by J. J. Toews, a pamphlet giving words of counsel to young Christians, was published in 1958. "Study Course Outline for Local Youth Groups" appeared in 1956. The Ontario Mennonite Brethren churches sponsor six radio broadcasts in which many of the young people participate.

In the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church the words "youth work" were recorded for the first time on September 31, 1928, when a committee of five was elected to begin the work. Youth meetings were held each Sunday evening for a short while but this has now been changed to twice a month. Christian Endeavor did not become established in the Alberta churches. The provincial youth committee follows the same pattern as in the other provinces, sponsoring a large annual youth conference and also a youth workers' conference.

The largest concentration of Mennonite Brethren people in Canada is in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. Although youth work was slow in beginning, once it got started it pushed ahead very quickly. The British Columbia Youth Committee sponsors a large program of youth rallies, conferences and leadership clinics annually in order to reach the hundreds of young people in the area. The youth workers meet twice annually. A youth camp takes place prior to the fall youth rally, at which time the inter-church quiz finals are held.

The British Columbia Youth Committee has seen the need of supplying study material for youth groups and has done some work in this area by having five study lessons prepared.

Besides giving their support to the Canadian Youth Project they sponsor a large mission project



The doors are still open for youth to worship.

of their own annually. Proceeds from this fund have been donated to the building fund of the West Coast Children's Mission, radio work, city rescue missions, and foreign mission projects.

#### *South America*

The ninth session of the South American District Conference held in Guarituba, Brazil, in 1960 elected its first Youth Committee with H. Wiens, Fernheim; E. Eitzen, Fernheim; O. Reimer, Bouqueirao, as members. In support of the work of this committee the South American District Conference pledged offerings to be received in the churches. The Committee sponsors annual youth retreats for the young people of its churches.

Much youth work has been done before this present organization. Leading brethren in the churches were mindful of the spiritual needs of the young people. The schools which they established under difficult economic conditions revealed this concern. Help came from the brethren in North America. Preachers and teachers were sent to the South to serve in schools and in the preaching ministry in the churches. Prospective workers for the churches were given financial assistance by various agencies in the United States and Canada. With this help they came to the schools in the North to prepare for service in the South.

Our churches in South America have a large number of young people. This represents a spiritual potential, gives promise of future growth and expansion, and remains a continuing responsibility for the brethren there.



# Music

## United States

"Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God."

In considering the purpose and intent of public worship, our people have generally given serious thought to the matter of musical literature, even though at times there have appeared tendencies in instances to consider this phase of worship in a perfunctory manner. As a whole there has been the consciousness of the importance and influence of the hymn and gospel song in the act of worship.

Early services of the Mennonite Brethren consisted of singing, prayer, and reading from the Scriptures with devotional comment. Hearty singing, including gospel songs in addition to the traditional chorales, soon characterized the new group.

### *Production of Hymnals*

The great apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." In evaluating the church music of the past it appears that this has been the primary directive of our forefathers in their selection of musical material.

The first denominational song book in use in the United States was the *Zions Glaubensstimme—Gesangbuch der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde in Nordamerika—zusammengestellt von H. W. Grage*, 1905. Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, Medford, Oklahoma.

Basically this was a Baptist song book, for which arrangements were made to be used in its entirety with a special preface and cover. The book, however, was purchased mainly by individual members of the congregations.

The most popularly used congregational song book has been the *Evangeliums-Lieder*—a Biglow and Main product. This same company published the earlier *Gospel Hymns* from which Ira D. Sankey and Walter Rauschenbusch translated and compiled this book. Many of these songs are now used in their original form in the *Mennonite Brethren Church Hymnal*.

### *A Conference or Denominational Hymnal*

The desire to see a song book, a hymnal, compiled that the Conference could look upon as truly expressing the faith of the Mennonite Brethren has been expressed many times. As early as 1903 at a Conference in Nebraska this was expressed by a few of the church musicians and ministers.

The first definite consideration for the creation of such a hymnal was taken up by the 43rd General Conference, 1945, at Dinuba, California. The Board of Reference and Counsel recommended to the General Conference "that we proceed energetically with the production of a song book with notes to satisfy the needs of our churches." Various directives were given. The last of these made the suggestion that such a "book be produced in both the English and the German languages." This delayed the compilation, since the Canadian Brethren were already preparing (or compiling) a book of German songs.

At the 44th General Conference, 1948, at Mountain Lake, a review of this entire matter was made with the result that a committee was authorized to formulate an English hymnal. A full account of the workings of this committee is recorded in the introduction of the completed *Mennonite Brethren Church Hymnal*. At the Hillsboro Conference, October, 1954, the committee made its final presentation and report. "The report was accepted with gratitude."

The hymnal is now in its fourth printing. The three previous editions totaling 20,000 copies have practically all been sold and distributed.

The entire book has been arranged with the classic hymnal format in mind with all the important indices and responsive readings included. However, in the index of authors and composers very few Mennonite Brethren names are found. This should be kept in mind if and when this present *Hymnal* is to be revised. Our Conference is blessed with capable contributors.

It should be mentioned here that the Hymnal Committee and some of the brethren from the Canadian area have been in conference to consider the formulation of a General Conference Hymnal compiled by a committee representing both areas. As yet no definite steps have been taken to bring this into being.



A church service without the singing of a choir is almost unthinkable.

### *History and Place of Choirs in Church Life*

God has blessed the Mennonite Brethren with a more than average interest in the use of the voice to sing praises to His Holy Name. As to the history of choir work in the various congregations we can here only make generalizations, for it would require research from congregation to congregation to present definite data.

The place of choir work in our churches is so commonly accepted as being a necessity that we can hardly imagine a church without a choir. Only in extreme cases of small membership is a standing choir impossible, and then there is always enough interest to form smaller ensembles. It is generally expected that the ones taking part in such musical activities lead a circumspect life so that the message of the song and the life of the singer harmonize.

The annual song festivals held in centrally located areas attest to the existence of the choirs, ladies and male choruses, and various smaller ensembles, and in general to the great interest in the vocal performance media. There seems to be some need for encouraging young people to give themselves to the art of musical leadership.

### *Conductors' Clinics*

In the United States conductors' clinics are as yet not as common as the need for these clinics or workshops warrants. From time to time such clinics have been arranged for and generally with good success. To develop this further the 1959 United States Conference at Henderson appointed a committee which was charged with the responsibility to develop this phase of the music of the church. This committee of five organized with Brother Eugene Gerbrandt as chairman. From this group

comes the suggestion that the local churches interested in developing their music program contact this committee for help, that groups of churches located in close proximity invite an instructor for such clinical work and that an invitational clinic be conducted annually at the two schools—Pacific College, Fresno, and Tabor College, Hillsboro. The committee desires to assist in developing local leadership, and also in finding appropriate vocal material for choirs and other ensembles.

### *Instrumental Music*

The electric organ is more common in the churches of the Conference at present than the piano was forty years ago. Every sanctuary now has a piano and many have electric organs of various ranks and makes. Beyond this the use of instrumental music is almost a rarity, especially in the Sunday morning worship service. However, there is no objection to the use of musical instruments on special occasion. Rather, this is being encouraged in most churches.

The extensive use of the singing voice has brought the art of vocal performance to the level of perfection which is rather difficult to equal by the instrumentalist. In spite of the extensive training—mostly in band instruments—which the children now receive in the public schools, there is yet very little carry-over to church music. Literature for this purpose is somewhat slow in being developed. This phase of music needs to be encouraged.

"Praise the Lord with the harp: sing unto him with the psalter and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth."

## Canada

The Lord has put a new song of deliverance and praise into the mouths of His children. To express this joy in song is a pleasant duty. We have become known as a people who are fond of singing; probably it is not incorrect to say that never before has there been as much music making as there is at present. It behooves us, nevertheless, in this centenary year to consider briefly how this interest in good music and especially in good singing has been kept alive in our brotherhood, and has, we trust, increased our awareness of the spiritual significance of our ministry in song.

### *History and Place of Choirs in Our Churches*

When we speak of singing, we naturally think of our church choirs. A history of our church choirs is synonymous with the growth of our churches; a church service without the singing of the choir is almost unthinkable. The function of the choir has always been to support the preacher in the pulpit and to impress the truths of God's Word indelibly upon the hearts of the congregation. The singing of the choirs is not meant to be a performance; it is much rather a spiritual ministry having the edification of the saints as its aim and the glorification of God as its object. Although there is an ever-present danger to try to emulate secular standards of performance, nevertheless, the Christian must be guided by superior motives when he rejects inferior standards.

### *Production of Hymnals*

In the last fifteen years the Canadian Conference has produced two hymnals. Realizing the inadequacy of the *Evangeliums-Lieder* for the total church program, the Committee of Reference and Counsel recommended to the Canadian Conference in 1945 that Brother Ben Horch work with the existing Music Committee to create a distinctly Mennonite Brethren Hymnal in the German language. The Conference of 1946 elected a special *Gesangbuch* Committee, of which Brother F. C. Thiessen was chairman, and commissioned it with the task of compiling and publishing this hymnal. The problems of revision and printing were almost insurmountable, but God undertook for every need and in 1952 the historic moment had come—we had our own hymnal, *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde*.

With the gradual emergence of a bilingual Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada the Music Committee was commissioned in 1955 to recreate the *Gesangbuch* into an English language parallel.

"The actual matter of creating this new English language parallel was not so much a problem of translation, but much more of recreating familiar

spiritual concepts from one language origin into that of another. Musical consideration heightened the difficulties a great deal in terms of fixed melodies, fixed harmonies and especially fixed rhythmic patterns." (Quotation from the Preface to the English hymnal.)

We are greatly indebted to the late F. C. Thiessen who was directly responsible for the choice of the song material and to Ben Horch, who was largely responsible for the correctness of the material and the translation of the *Gesangbuch* into its English parallel.

### *Choral Clinics*

In Canada we can speak of choral clinics on three distinct levels: the local church, the provincial and the all-Canadian. God has always given us brethren with special concern for the musical development of our choirs. In 1912 the brethren John P. Wiebe and Aron G. Sawatsky were directly responsible for *Kurse* work (choral clinics) on the local church level. In fact these men were so influential that they were given an additional day at the annual Canadian Conference to accommodate a *Saengerfest* (song festival).

Choral clinics on the second level were introduced in 1943 when Ben Horch was appointed by the Canadian Conference to visit all the provinces. His inspiring personality, musical mastery, and spiritual discernment established high ideals and did much in determining the musical destiny of our choirs and congregations.

The third level was the result of a recommendation by the Music Committee in 1945 that an all-Canadian music conference for conductors be called. This first conference proved so valuable that a biennial, all-Canadian conductors' clinic has already become tradition.

The organ has become an aid in our church services.





Special mention should also be made of Brother C. D. Toews, of the Canadian Conference Music Committee. Much of the progress in the past ten years is due to the initiative and hard work of this committee.

#### *Instrumental Music*

With the exception of a few churches the area of organized instrumental music has been sorely neglected. We have failed to recognize the potential of instrumental music as a medium to ennoble life and character. People will always listen to music, secular as well as sacred. Is there any Christian imperative here? Will those for whom we are responsible listen to jazz, or are we giving them the tools to appreciate the fine things of life? "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatso-

ever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

#### *A Biblical Philosophy*

At the threshold of a new era in the life of the Mennonite Brethren Church let us remind ourselves of the New Testament pattern for church music. The Apostle Paul does not directly refer to music when listing God's gifts for the ministry of the church. We find, however, in the light of Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16 that music is to be a ministry, ministering through song as a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor and a teacher. By God's grace we want to rededicate ourselves to this great ministry.

## Women and the Church

"Practical Christianity is becoming to a woman." These words were spoken at the twenty-fifth anniversary of a women's sewing circle by a member who had clearly demonstrated this truth in her own life. She had also seen the beauty of faith in action in the lives of other members. The beauty of Christ and the lordship of His love as manifested in one of His servants is the greatest drawing power the world will ever know. In the city, in rural areas, at home, and abroad, Christian women are seeking to express their love of Jesus Christ both individually and as church-related groups.

Women need each other. They need the joy of shared laughter, the sense of accomplishment which comes with working together, the strengthening experience of praying together, the deepening friendship which comes with sharing life's hopes, joys, and disappointments. They need to know that there are those with whom they can weep. But in all these experiences they come to know their own greater need of God.

In Christ women are sisters, born of one Spirit, servants of one Lord, witnesses of one God. And in keeping with the Scriptural principles of love and unity the sisters of our churches have banded together for spiritual fellowship and service.

The history of women's work in our churches is as old as the church. The Mennonite Brethren his-

torian P. M. Friesen speaks of the *Naeh- und Strickstunden* which grew out of the revival in Gnadenfeld in South Russia. Although the work in the churches in Russia was never organized as fully as it now is in our United States and Canadian churches, the women made their contribution to the cause of Christ in the traditional manner of women —by the skills of a homemaker. In Rueckenau at the annual church business meetings it was decided what work was to be done by the sisters of the church in the coming year. Cloth and other materials were purchased and distributed to the various women's groups. The finished articles were gathered at Rueckenau to be sold by auction usually at Pentecost. The proceeds were directed to the foreign missions cause. With the outbreak of World War I all contacts with the mission fields were broken and the inner turmoil of the land brought an end to organized activity.

#### *Local Groups*

The Mennonite Brethren Church transplanted its roots to the United States and Canada with the large migrations in 1874 and later in 1923-26. As new churches were founded and the mission interest of the churches grew, the women also began to show a spiritual concern for the needs of others. In

some churches groups of women met occasionally to pray for newly sent out missionaries and to do a little sewing for their outfits and for the needy natives. Small children frequently accompanied their mothers to these gatherings. Many of the members of these early groups were mothers in very modest homes, struggling to establish themselves in a new land. Money was scarce but the willingness to help was abundant, and so these enterprising women found ways of raising money by the sale of various types of handiwork.

The plan which they found practical is familiar to all women's sewing circles. Articles generally needed in every household such as aprons, pillow cases, tea towels or quilts were prepared to be sold to the highest bidder at the mission sale. This was the pattern of activity for many years for most groups and met the needs of the women in that day. It continues to meet a need for activity and raising funds in many church circles even today.

A fuller program in various stages of development has today been incorporated into the activities of women's groups where it has been possible and practical. These activities and projects vary greatly from church to church, but the end purpose is always the same—to further the kingdom of God. Most groups have sought in some way to harness the special skills of the homemaker for the cause of missions. Missionaries have been outfitted; much sewing has been done for the MCC, for homes for the aged, as well as for hospitals, camps and educational institutions of our Conference. While the number of completed baby jackets, receiving blankets, bed sheets and rolls of bandages can be counted and recorded, the spiritual values gained in this very practical ministry can never be measured.

Money for mission causes which was in the early years nearly all raised by sale of handiwork or baked goods is now also being gathered by regular offerings at the meetings. Some groups also add to their treasury by custom quilting, by birthday boxes, by holding special programs in churches, and by catering for weddings.

The expanding program of activities now also includes studies of specific mission fields and missionary biographies, Bible and Bible-related subjects. A closer contact with the missionaries is maintained by regular correspondence and by personal visits of the missionaries to church groups. Many groups make regular visits to the sick, the aged and the mentally infirm. Through this enriched program there has come a better understanding of the great need of prayer to undergird the entire work of the Lord.

#### *District Organizations*

In the early years of women's work in our churches there was very little connection between the groups of the various churches scattered throughout a district. In the late 1940's it became

evident that there was a growing interest and concern for a more unified program and perhaps also a district organization to provide more adequate information and help for the various aspects of the work which women are able to do.

The women of the missionary sewing circle of the Pacific District Conference took the first step in this direction of uniting and unifying their work in October, 1948, at the Bakersfield Conference. Upon the encouragement and motion of the brethren the eighteen existing missionary circles were organized as the Women's Missionary Service with Mrs. Henry Martens as chairman. This has grown to include thirty-four active groups today.

The purpose of this district organization was to distribute the work of helping to supply the needs of our outgoing missionaries and of those already on the field. It was to serve as a channel through which the Board of Foreign Missions and missionaries could make the needs known. Since some of the women's groups were small and therefore could not undertake a large missionary project under this plan all would have a part in the work, each group giving according to its means.

A second aim of this district organization was to create a stronger interest in, and greater understanding of, the need for prayer to undergird the entire work of our brotherhood. To accomplish these purposes the work was divided into different phases:

1. Missionary Program and Prayer Chairman who is responsible to make up the prayer lists for the individual groups and to keep them informed as to the activities of the missionaries, their furloughs, and speaking engagements.

2. Missionary Sewing Chairman who is responsible for sending out to the groups the lists of the needs of the outgoing missionaries and of those on the fields.

3. MCC Chairman who is to keep the groups informed as to the needs for relief. This includes such items as leper bundles, Christmas bundles, and clothes for relief.

4. Home for the Aged Chairman who is responsible for the needs of this institution which can be met by the women's groups.

5. Educational Chairman who is to keep the groups informed as to the progress and needs of the schools of our Conference in the district and to create interest among the parents and young people of our Conference to support our schools.

6. Historian and Publicity Chairman whose duty it is to keep an up-to-date record of the activities of the Women's Missionary Service and to publicize all events such as the rallies and conferences in the *Christian Leader* and local newspapers.

Some of the projects of the Women's Missionary Service of the Pacific District Conference in recent years have been to supply the funds for the building of a maternity hospital in Africa. In 1956 an annual project of \$1,000 for the support of a mis-



Women's organizations in our churches have contributed to our work and witness.

sionary nurse for this hospital was accepted. The goal for the centennial year 1960 is \$5,000 for this district exclusive of the separate projects of individual groups. This sum is to be gathered by voluntary contributions to be received at the annual missionary rally and the women's conference.

After calling several general women's meetings at which reports of activities and mission reports were given, the sewing circles of the Southern District Conference organized in a similar manner in November, 1954, with Mrs. J. J. Gerbrandt as chairman. The first official business meeting of the Southern District Women's Missionary Service was held October 24, 1955, with twenty-six of the possible thirty circles responding to the roll call.

The purpose and organizational structure of this body of women is similar to that of the Pacific District Women's Missionary Service. Annual business meetings are held at the time of the district conference. The afternoon meeting is usually of an inspirational nature with missionary reports and a message by a minister. Area missionary rallies are held in the spring of the year by a team consisting of the Women's Missionary chairman, vice-chairman, several lady missionaries and a member of the Board of Foreign Missions or a missionary on furlough. Receipts during the year 1959 totalled over \$4,500 and were directed to various causes at home and abroad. During this centennial year both of these district organizations are promoting a special sacrificial love offering on the part of every member.

In conjunction with the fiftieth Central District Conference held at Lustre, Montana, October 10-13, 1960, representatives of the women's sewing circles met to organize on a district level. With the formation of this Women's Missionary Service of the Central District the local groups will now be united in an extended program of fellowship, study, and service.

Of course, the sewing circles in the churches of the Central District have already behind them a long history of blessed fellowship and service. In the older churches of Mountain Lake and Delft the

women's groups have worked industriously to prepare articles for a joint mission sale. This sale was held annually on July 4. The occasion developed into a mission festival which greatly strengthened the cause of missions and from which spiritual blessings came into the lives of young and old.

In the Henderson church the sewing circle functioned since the early 1930's. Various articles were prepared for an annual mission sale. The sisters helped in outfitting missionaries. At their regular meetings they carried on a devotional and inspirational program. Their prayer fellowship served for mutual strengthening and included intercession for missionaries and mission work.

The sewing circle of the Silver Lake church in South Dakota was also begun in the early 1930's. The group of sisters met once a month in a home. In these regular meetings there was emphasis on Bible study, testimonies, and prayer fellowship with intercession for missionaries. The sisters also held an offering at each meeting. The money was given for missions, relief, MCC, outfitting missionaries, and buying materials to sew articles for sale. Articles for an annual mission sale were prepared by the individual sisters in their respective homes. The money realized from the mission sale was designated to missions and to home projects. In recent years the sisters meet during the daytime for specified work days to prepare articles for mission purposes. Throughout the years the sisters of the Central District have made a significant contribution toward the furtherance of the work of the Kingdom of God.

In Canada the organization of women's groups in the churches has kept steady pace with the organization of new churches. In Herbert, Saskatchewan, one of the older churches, mission sewing circles were formed as early as 1913, but no regular meetings were held until 1925. The fall of 1959 saw the women of South Saskatchewan form a joint organization under the name of Mennonite Brethren Mission Auxiliary. In a locality where most of the local groups are very small, there was a distinct advantage in banding together in order



to be able to work more effectively. In their first year of co-operative work \$900 was contributed towards a dormitory in the Belgian Congo.

The women of the churches in North Saskatchewan had already taken this step of uniting their work in the spring of 1958 under the name of Women's Missionary Fellowship, with Mrs. C. C. Willms as chairman. One of their initial projects was the outfitting of medical missionary Dr. Ernest Schmidt of the Belgian Congo. The residence for missionaries on furlough purchased by the North Saskatchewan District Conference was furnished in part by the Women's Missionary Fellowship. The budget for 1959-60 totals approximately \$4,000 to be distributed for both foreign and home mission needs.

Out of the desire to outfit outgoing missionaries more uniformly the British Columbia women's district organization was formed in 1953-54 under the name of Mennonite Brethren Church Ladies Aid of British Columbia. Twice a year the chairman and vice-chairman of each group meet to decide on the projects and activities for the coming year. Their work has included among other projects the supplying of missionary outfits, \$400 sent annually to the Board of Foreign Missions for Christmas gifts for missionary children, and the helping of needy families in city mission work.

Besides the many local groups meeting in the churches of Manitoba an annual Women's Missionary Rally is held. The speaker is usually a member of the Board of Foreign Missions. Direct contact with the Board and also with the mission fields has furthered and strengthened the work.

One of the oldest Mennonite Brethren women's groups in Ontario is in the Kitchener church. In 1930 a few of the sisters who were burdened for the work of the Lord began to meet in the homes and make a few articles for sale, as well as quilts for the poor. Their true religion frequently took them into homes with many children where they helped the harassed housemother with her backlog of mending, sewing and darning. As new churches have been organized in Ontario active women's mission circles have also been formed. The three women's missionary organizations of the St. Catharines M. B. Church try to meet a budget of \$5,500 for missions giving each year. A new activity added during this year for all Ontario groups has been the regular visiting of patients at Bethesda Home for the Mentally Ill.

In Coaldale, Alberta Mrs. Peter Klassen founded the first women's sewing circle in 1930. As in most other areas the first meetings were held in the homes, and then later in the church edifice. After the opening devotions while the women are working at sewing or quilting some member reads a portion from some inspirational or educational book. The finished articles are sold by auction and the church determines to which mission the proceeds will be sent. The Coaldale church has four groups,

the smaller churches in Alberta usually only one or two.

A women's missionary rally is held annually at the time of the business sessions of the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren church.

As the Mennonite Brethren Church is rethinking its position in this period of transition in matters of language, cultural patterns, and in policies and methods of work, leaders of women are rethinking the traditional pattern of women's church-related activities. There has been a change in recent years. The shift of emphasis has been from sewing circles to mission circles. Greater emphasis is being placed on study, devotions and programs of activity which shall not supplant but be complementary to the working with hands. The improved economy of the country has not only made it possible but also imperative that more of the funds needed for mission causes be contributed by personal giving. Women are realizing the importance of learning more about the causes to which they can contribute from their own purses instead of looking for more ways to raise more money. More than ever before they must also find in the worship and study program of the group a source of strength and power for the living of the Christian life. The need exists, however, for a larger supply of Christian literature suitable for women's study groups.

Women's groups are aiming more than ever before to be what they should be—a really vital arm of the body of Christ, and not merely a social organization. Women's groups are more active than they have ever been, but with this increased activity comes the humbling knowledge that activity is never a criterion of the worth of an organization. Leaders of women's work in our churches are discovering that the task of the church, which is the Body of Christ, including every Christian woman, is to witness to the world and to serve the needy in it. Therefore, some of the traditional attitudes and activities of women stand under review and are subject to modification.

To a large extent the world will always judge the Church of Jesus Christ by the character which the Gospel produces in the women believers. Our Mennonite Brethren Church stands judged by the world according to what the Gospel has been able to do in and through the sisters. The course our brotherhood will take in this era of change will to a large extent be determined by the values which its women hold highest in life.

These values are reflected and also revealed in our women's service groups, in their choice of activity and service. The pioneer work of our women's organizations has been done. The groundwork has been laid. In which direction does their future course lie? They can become stranded in a morass of mediocrity, of purposeless activity as some women's groups have done, or they can move forward on the firm ground of a Christ-directed program.

# The Mennonite Brethren Church

## An Evaluation of the Past

In "remembering the marvelous works that God hath done" for our brotherhood in the past century, it is of utmost importance and a cause for deepest humility that the heavenly Father has laid a consuming passion for lost humanity and for the Church of Jesus Christ in many lands, upon the hearts of the membership. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" was the victory wrought by Christ, the Son of God, on Calvary's Cross. The implementation of this victory, Christ, in His great commission, has delegated to His blood-washed followers. Only those who know the new life themselves and who possess the passion constrained by the love of Christ, qualify to carry the message of redemption to the uttermost parts of the earth.

It is also significant that next to making converts, our brotherhood has in its missionary outreach at home and abroad committed itself to the deep conviction that the followers won for Christ must be formed into churches and become evangelists of the Gospel message.

### *Outreach*

The Lord of the harvest granted to us a vision for the lost, and a belief in the Church of Jesus Christ. The Lord of the harvest has also granted to our brotherhood for a century the gracious privilege, the workers, the schools in which to train them, the field, and the funds to carry out the great commission:

The Conference missionaries on foreign fields increased from four in 1899 to 45 in 1945, to 183 in 1955, to 200 in 1960. To this number must be added the numerous workers in home and city missions.

In 1889 our missionaries went to India, in 1894 to the Comanches, in 1911 to China, in 1912 to Africa, in 1935 to Paraguay, in 1945 to Brazil and Colombia, in 1950 to Japan and Mexico, in 1953 to Ecuador, Germany and Austria.

The mission receipts rose from \$1,672.16 in 1889 to \$5,107.26 in 1899, to \$197,786.58 in 1945, to \$492,760.48 in 1955, and to \$624,000.00 in 1960.

Above all, the native churches emerging on foreign fields through the missionary efforts of the M. B. Conference number many hundreds with tens of thousands of converts and members, and are found on every continent of the earth.

### *Schools*

By God's gracious providence He granted foresight to our Conference leaders and many progressive lay brethren, so that the brotherhood has during the past 100 years provided its own educational institutions to train its young people ranging all the way from elementary schools to schools of higher learning. In Europe the educational institutions were at the outset common Mennonite effort. In North America the schools, especially Bible schools, Colleges and the Seminary have been distinctly Mennonite Brethren. It is an outstanding achievement for a constituency the size of the Mennonite Brethren to maintain and administer these schools. This achievement is made possible only by the grace of God and the sacrificial service and contribution of men with conviction and faith. These men believed that the confession of a church and its missionary outreach had permanence and dynamic only to the degree of soundness and spiritual life of its educational institutions.

### *Watchfulness*

Under God, the Conference churches, by the endowment of the Holy Spirit, have religiously guarded the messages from their pulpits, the voice of the church publications, the teachings of the Bible Schools and Colleges, and the Sunday school materials. This has been done lest the slightest deviation take place from the great fundamentals of the revealed Word of God, its redemptive plan of salvation through the vicarious death of the Son of God, its teachings of an ethical and separated life from the world, and its faith in the infallible Word of God, for the Word must ever remain the basis of our faith and practice.

### *Evangelism*

It should also be noted that the constituency has been thoroughly evangelized so that the percentage of born-again believers within the confines of the Conference as a church has always been very high. It can be said that, in general, the great concern and earnest prayer of the church, of the parents, and the homes has consistently been that every member of the family, and every attendant at church, and every maidservant and manservant might experience redemption through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

### *Area of Weaknesses*

While the spiritual fruitage on the foreign fields has been phenomenal, and the schools and pulpits have been diligent during the first 100 years, the growth in membership of the Conference in the homeland has been, with several exceptions, from the descendants of the original Mennonite Brethren constituency. Very few spiritual followers who also became members of the Mennonite Brethren Church have been added during the first century from the countrymen round about. In a large measure, this can be attributed to the use of a foreign language rather than the national language until after the first quarter of the twentieth century. The transition to the language of the land has now, however, been largely made and the church is reaching out into its neighborhoods.

Also in the area of publications—the production and publication of doctrinal, exegetical, historical,

Christian and scientific literature—the brotherhood has been tardy. This is true in spite of the fact that there are a good number of men capable of making such contributions. A limited number of books have appeared on the history of the church, its missions, on doctrine, peace, dispensational truth, Sunday school, music, and relief service.

### *Reorientation*

By God's grace the past century has endowed our brotherhood with a great spiritual potential. By His enabling we have received an implicit faith in the Church, in the marvelous redemptive provision in Christ, and in the inspired Word of God quickened by the Holy Spirit. We have received a supreme desire to glorify and obey God. The incumbent burden for the lost is upon us. We are in possession of the resources of a believing youth, a system of adequate schools to train this youth, and an evangelical and devoted ministry. We are equipped with a well-established set of church papers and periodicals and publishing houses. Ours is a challenging foreign and home missions program, a material relief activity, and a public relations and peace service. We have a church-going laity that is wide awake in farm and business. Our economic resources are spread over a wide geographic area and a variety of occupations, skills and professions. Linguistically we are becoming more integrated. In addition to all these resources we have a great God. What will we do and whom will we serve with this tremendous potential during the next hundred years?

## **An Analysis of the Present**

The centennial year 1960 inevitably calls for renewed self-orientation. Whoever seeks self-orientation will benefit by answering three questions: Where do I come from? Where am I now? Where am I going? We have reviewed the past and shall face the challenge of the future. Between the past and the future there must be an objective evaluation of the present status of the Mennonite Brethren Church. This is no easy task. In making such an evaluation there is the ever-present danger of indulging in either praise or blame. We must consciously guard against these excesses. In the untinted light of reality we see the Mennonite Brethren Church of 1960.

### *Increasing Numerically*

The average annual rate of membership increase in the homeland is approximately 580 or two and one-half per cent. This is a very modest growth and gives no occasion for boastful pride. Taking

the average, this growth represents the efforts of two hundred members with all their preaching and praying and living to win five converts per year. In other words, it takes the average member forty years to win one soul for the Lord.

### *Spreading and Shifting Geographically*

We are scattered over many states and provinces and countries. At the same time we have tended to settle in smaller concentrated groups. On the positive side, this has permitted those of like faith to meet in adequate groups for self-edification. It also enables us to disseminate the light of the Gospel over a wide area. On the negative side, living in widely separated groups tends toward the development of local patriotism which in turn builds up tensions and petty rivalries among groups. Although our geographic locations do not seem to hinder our united effort in foreign missions, the geographic separation does make the establishment and support



of certain conference-wide enterprises, such as higher institutions of learning, difficult.

The present shift of membership from rural to urban areas must not escape mention. We already observe also the shifting of centers of influence and the psychological effect, especially on the diminishing rural churches. We are face to face with the problems of providing for proper expansion and adjustment in the urban area. Similarly we must find a way to undergird the rural churches in their adjustment to changes forced upon them by circumstances.

#### *Prospering Economically*

The church benefits from its share in the general national prosperity. The present generation does not know want. Earnings are higher than ever before. Many, no doubt, earn to have and to hold; others, to live and to give. Missionary, educational and philanthropic projects get liberal support from the brotherhood. Appeals for help do not generally fall on deaf ears. Yet it is evident that we have not nearly reached the limit of our giving. Our problem is not that we do not earn enough, but that we do not save enough by means of sacrificial living in order to contribute more where it is needed.

#### *Standing Firm Doctrinally*

We are sound in the pulpit. We preach from the Bible as the Word of God. Liberal theology has not made menacing inroads into our churches. The strong emphasis on Bible training on the lower level has been a great asset to those who have ventured forth into higher training. If liberalism, under whatever name it may parade, poses as a threat to our constituency, this threat appears to stem not so much from the pulpit as from the pew. Young intellectuals who bypass training in fundamental schools and absorb the attitudes and teachings of liberal-minded instructors in secular schools might well influence our doctrinal position in the future, should they come back as influential lay brethren and speak in the name of higher learning. It is not enough for us to have fundamental schools. We must strive energetically to have our present generation attend these schools.

#### *Struggling Ethically*

Correct doctrine and right living are closely related. Our emphasis in the past has been as much on the separated life as on right belief. Today complaints are pouring in that worldliness is wedging its way into our ranks. Those who seek to hold the line are often branded as narrow. The younger generation studies our history and points up the fact that we now condone what we once condemned. They draw the conclusion that what is being con-

demned today will be acceptable and accepted tomorrow. Why can they not be just one step ahead and enjoy today what the majority will sanction next day? There is a great need today for establishing principles of right and wrong in the minds of our people and stating them in such a way that they do not need a revision every time that same evil comes to us dressed in a different garb.

It becomes increasingly evident to those who are concerned, that we cannot hold the line simply by reinforcing our old stakes but by fostering the deeper spiritual life. The strongest motives for a pure life are still the love of the good and the fear of evil. One of the sinister wiles of the devil today is *die Verharmlosung* (making sin seem harmless) of that which is basically evil. How often people seek to justify their actions by saying, "I see no harm in that." Only the Holy Spirit can give to us the power of discrimination that is needed to be able to choose what is good and to avoid what is evil.

Spirituality in the opinion of this writer is to be judged not by outward appearances, nor by a staunch defense of the old order, but according to the degree one is guided by the Holy Spirit. In gauging the spirituality of the Mennonite Brethren Church we must not compare the present state of spirituality with what it once was, but with what it could be now. The environment in which we have been placed with our experience of the new birth, our doctrinal beliefs, and our opportunities for the expression of the new life, should have led to greater progress in our submission to divine rule in our lives. Our primary need at present is not for more personal prestige, or ecclesiastical pomp, or religious programs, but for more Holy Spirit power manifested in the lives of all members.

True, we have a foreign missions force of approximately 200 dedicated workers. Our foreign missions budget is well beyond the annual half million mark. We engage pastors in our home churches and missionaries for the home fields. But what does the average church member do by way of personal witnessing by means of life and lip, in the home, in the school, in the office, and wherever the circumstances of life have placed him? Like the early Christians, we are scattered abroad, not necessarily by persecution, though that has contributed, but are we like them, traveling and preaching the word to Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike? Every member ought to be a witness.

In 1960, we as the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America have the potential to be a tremendous missionary force. We have the numbers, we have the fields, we have the finances, we have the institutions, we have the unadulterated Gospel. Have we the will as Christians to convert this potential force into an actual force under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, backed with all our spiritual, physical and material resources? If so, we can face the future with confidence. If not, then, take alarm.

## The Prospect of the Future

A wise man has a good memory, puts into action what he knows, and has a plan for the future. He has an appreciation for the past and recognizes that he is part of an historical continuum. He translates the best of the past into a present mission. Memory isn't enough; he becomes active in the present tense. Finally, he projects himself into the future with a plan and a vision.

A wise church also has a good memory. It must be able to justify its origin and existence by its past experience. It must define and interpret the distinct contributions of its witness. In the present the church must translate its faith into a mission. It clings to the eternal absolutes and yet seeks to express these absolutes in a changing world. It makes careful distinctions between eternal verities and cultural relativities. It is dogmatic and creative at the same time, ever finding new forms for an old story. Finally it moves into an uncharted future with a divine charter. Institutions without plans and a vision soon sputter into non-existence.

Will the Mennonite Brethren Church survive in the future? Do we have a sense of historic destiny, or will we be assimilated by the broader stream of evangelical Christianity? Our church will be a dynamic witness for God in the future if we can create for ourselves a Christian image and make a Christian imprint upon the world in terms of three distinctives.

### *Biblicism*

The early members of our church were often recognized by the bulging coat pocket which contained a well-born Bible. The "Bibelstunden" became the basis of their fellowship and worship. Reading the Word was part of their daily family pattern. Later the Bible school became the basis of their educational program. The Bible was their law; they studied it with daring freedom, personal conviction and faith.

Our survival depends upon our adherence to a healthy Biblicism. This does not mean a cut-and-dried, categorical, and legalistic approach; it means rather that the Bible is accepted as God's authoritative and inspired revelation (II Timothy 3:16). It implies that the Bible supersedes ecclesiastical machinery and even closed theological systems. We must encourage the inductive as well as the deductive reading of the Bible. The faith of our Fathers can guide us, but it won't save us. Each generation must study the Word. Individual and corporate Bible study could well serve as one of the unifying factors of our church in the future.

### *Conversion*

The Bible is God's objective revelation to man. Conversion is a personal experience between God

and man (John 3:3). An intellectual comprehension of the Bible is not enough. Our church was born as the result of a revival in Russia. To the founders of our church conversion was a deep experience with two dimensions. First it meant salvation as a work of grace through faith. Secondly it meant a new life of discipleship under the Lordship of Christ.

Our church is in a unique position to keep in proper balance these two dimensions of the conversion experience. In an age of self-reliance and naturalism we must uphold the all-sufficiency and grace of God (Rom. 3:23-25). We must point man to the cross as the only hope. But in an age of moral irresponsibility we must also proclaim the demands of discipleship. Conversion is a transformation, a new life (II Cor. 5:17). It demands holiness, purity, separation, and a positive non-conformity. It leads to a new ethics of love in a hostile world (Romans 12). To know Christ means to follow Him. This deeper conversion becomes our second distinctive.

### *Witnessing*

A new life in Christ finds expression in a dynamic witness. Conversion is not an end in itself. One of the concerns of our early church was to break through the walls of tradition and isolationism of colonial culture in Russia and then ultimately to launch an extensive missionary program that has become the greatest unifying factor of our brotherhood.

In the future urban world we will not be able to depend upon rural cultural patterns, language, or even biological descent to preserve our identity. The great unifying factor of the future cannot be ethnic cohesion but rather a corporate witness. The great principle of separation can no longer be construed to mean isolation or retreat. We are called to witness to the very world that we would reject. This involves us in a tension, and in this tension we remain a prophetic minority voice, calling people to repentance and to a life of discipleship.

The nature of our witness must be an extension of the two dimensions of conversion. Evangelism assumes that the basic problems of man are spiritual, and its major purpose is to lead man into a right relationship with God. But it also recognizes that conversion does not take place in a vacuum. The convert must relate himself to a complex social order. Our witness must, therefore, relate itself to the economic, political, and social involvements of man. We must continue to express compassion for the hungry, the sick, the poor, and the homeless. We must share with others the blessings God has entrusted to our stewardship. We must seek more earnestly for Christian answers to the ambiguous

problems of church and state, economics, racial relations, militarism, capital punishment, entertainment, etc. To remain quiet on these issues is to suggest that Christianity has nothing to say about these practical questions.

It is at this point where the educator, the publisher, the doctor, the nurse, the engineer, the farmer, the scientist, the housewife, the business man, and the student must lock arms with the evangelist, the missionary, and the pastor in proclaiming Christ as

Saviour of man and then relating all human activities to this cardinal truth.

Will we survive in the future? Our challenge as a Mennonite Brethren Church during this centennial year is not to preserve ourselves (Luke 9:23-24), but to commit ourselves to a wholesome Biblicism, a deep conversion experience, and a comprehensive witness. It is our duty to be faithful till Jesus comes (Matt. 24:44). With such a commitment God will bless us and we will bless the world.

A comprehensive witness involves all of the man, all of the Word, and all of the world.





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